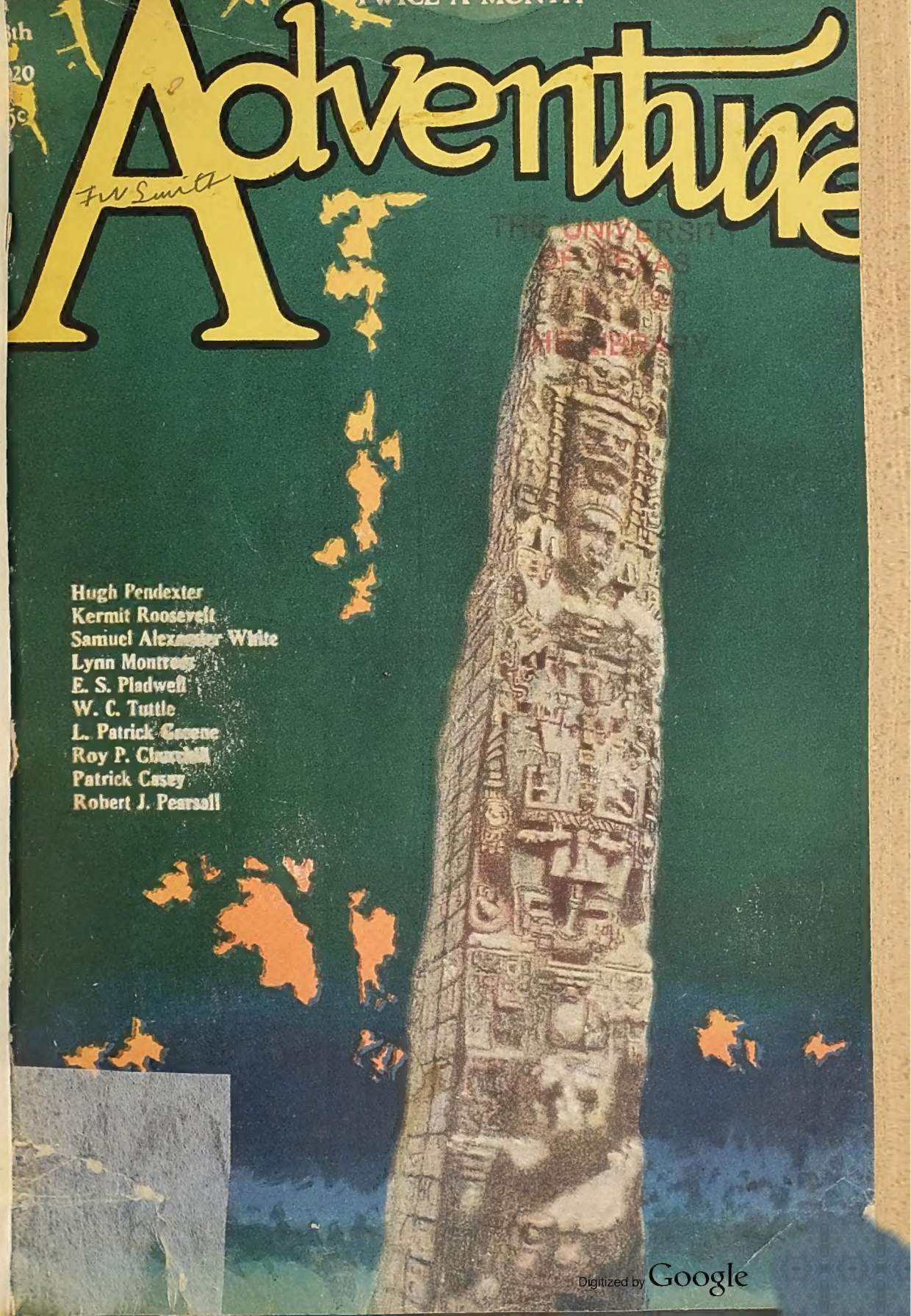
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure



Hugh Pendexter
Kermit Roosevelt
Samuel Alexander White
Lynn Montross
E. S. Pladwell
W. C. Tuttle
L. Patrick Greene
Roy P. Churchill
Patrick Casey
Robert J. Pearsall

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"We Must Have a Man *Who Knows*"

Which Job Do YOU WANT?

Office Men

Auditors, Accountants, Office Managers, Credit Men, Cashiers, Bookkeepers and Cost Clerks—$2,500 to $7,500 a year.

Factory Men

Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Factory Managers, Superintendents, Foremen, Designers and Draftsmen—$2,500 to $12,000 a year.

Construction Men

Civil and Structural Engineers, Transit Men, Construction Superintendents and Foremen, Estimators, Designers and Draftsmen—$2,500 to $10,000 a year.

Trades

Machinists and Toolmakers, Auto Repairers, Electricians, Stationary Engineers, Firemen, Plumbers, Carpenters, Pattern Makers and Telephone Men—$2,500 to $3,000 a year.

THAT'S what business men demand these days. The man who gets ahead is the fellow who trains to go ahead. You want a better position—more pay—a brighter future. You can assure yourself of all these things by giving a few spare hours a week to reading and study of any set of

Our Great PAY-RAISING Books

At Genuine Bargain Prices

Carpentry and Contracting, 6 volumes, 2138 pages, 1000 pictures. Was $37.50.....Now $24.80

Civil Engineering, 9 vol., 3900 pages, 3000 pictures. Was $67.50.....Now $39.80

Electrical Engineering, 8 vol., 3000 pages, 2600 pictures. Was $60.00.....Now $34.80

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Steam and Gas Engineering, 7 volumes, 3300 pages, 2500 pictures. Was $52.50.....Now $29.80

Law and Practice (with reading course), 13 volumes, 6000 pages, illustrated. Was $90.00.....Now $49.80

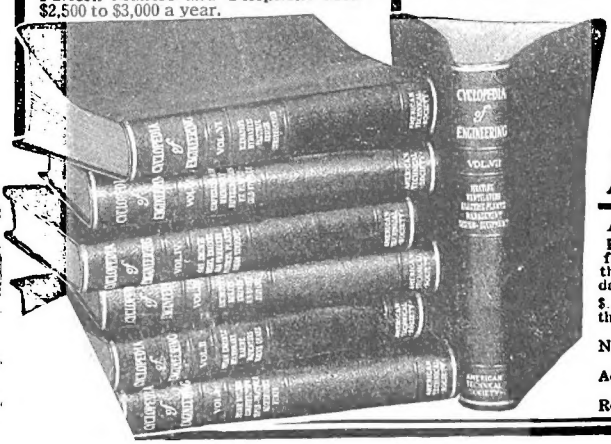
Fire Prevention and Insurance, 4 volumes, 1500 pages, 600 pictures. Was $30.00.....Now $19.80

Telephony and Telegraphy, 4 volumes, 1728 pages, 2000 pictures. Was $30.00.....Now $19.80

Sanitation, Heating and Ventilating, 4 volumes, 1451 pages, 1400 pictures. Was $30.00.....Now $18.80

Accountancy and Business Management, 7 volumes, 2700 pages, 800 pictures. Was $52.50, now $29.80

Drawing, 4 vol., 1578 pages, 1000 pictures, blueprints, etc. Was $30.00.....Now $19.80



SEND NO MONEY

Use Them a Whole Week FREE!

Don't send a single penny. Just fill out coupon and mail it. We will send you any set selected, express collect. Study it—use it a week; then if you can afford to be without it, send it back at our expense. If you decide to keep it, pay $2.80 within a week and send us $3 each month until the reduced price is paid.

American Technical Society Dept. B-108 Chicago, U. S. A.

American Technical Society, Dept. B-108 Chicago, Ill.

Please send me set of..... for 7 days' examination, shipping charges collect. I will examine the books thoroughly and, if satisfied, will send $2.80 within 7 days and $3.00 each month until I have paid the special price of $..... If I decide not to keep the books, I will return them by express at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....

Reference.....

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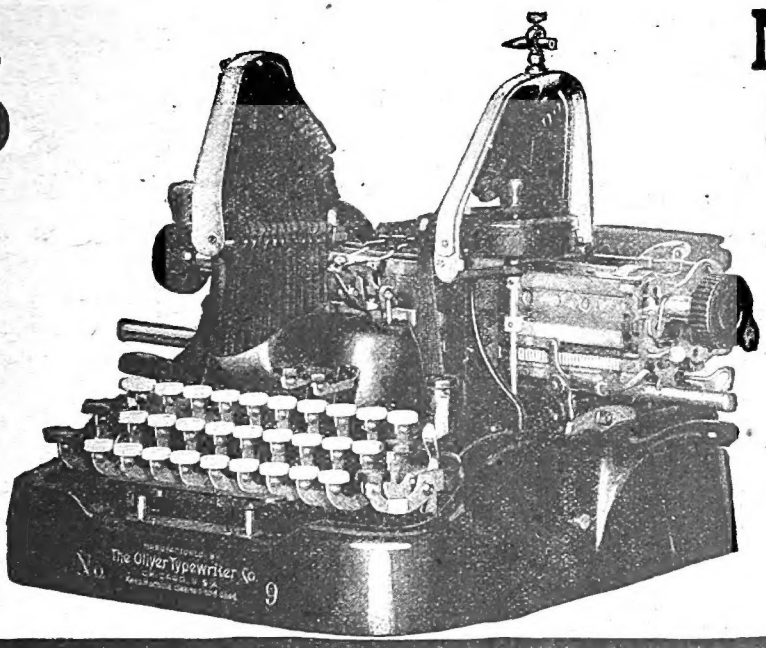
BOUND MAY 1943

Was $100

Before the War



Now $64

A Finer Typewriter at a Fair Price

ONLY $4 A MONTH

AFTER FREE TRIAL

Not a cent in advance. No deposit of any kind. No obligation to buy. The coupon is all you need send. The Oliver comes to you at our risk for five days free trial in your own home. Decide for yourself whether you want to buy or not. If you don't want to keep the Oliver, simply send it back at our expense. If you do agree that it is the finest typewriter, regardless of price, and want to keep it, take over a year to pay at the easy rate of only $4 a month.

Save $36

During the war we learned many lessons. We found that it was unnecessary to have such a vast number of traveling salesmen and so many expensive branch houses. We were able to discontinue many other superfluous sales methods. As a result, $64 now buys the identical Oliver formerly priced at $100.

Our Latest and Best Model

This is the finest and costliest Oliver we have ever built. It has all the latest improvements. It has a standard keyboard so that anyone may turn to it with ease.

Try this Oliver five days free and prove its merit to yourself.

Among the 800,000

Oliver purchasers are such distinguished concerns as:

Columbia Graphophone Co., National City Bank of N. Y., Boston Elevated Railway, Hart, Schaffner & Marx, U. S. Steel Corporation, New York Edison Co., American Bridge Co., Diamond Match Co., and others of great rank.

Send No Money

No money is required with the coupon. This is a real free trial offer. All at our expense and risk. If you don't want to keep the typewriter just send it back, express collect. We even refund the outgoing transportation charges, so you can't lose a penny.

Mail the Coupon

Note the two-way coupon. It brings you an Oliver for free trial or our catalog and copy of our booklet "The High Cost of Typewriters — The Reason and the Remedy."

Canadian Price, $82

The OLIVER Typewriter Company
738 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER CO.,
738 Oliver Typewriter Bldg.
Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver Nine for five days free inspection. If I keep it, I will pay $64 at the rate of $4 a month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for.

My shipping point is.....
This does not place me under any obligation to buy. If I choose to return the Oliver, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," your de luxe catalog and further information.

Name.....

Street Address.....

City..... State.....

Occupation or Business.....

ADVENTURE
Nov. 18th, 1920

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1, 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Volume 27
Number 4

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How Would You Like to Earn $300 Next Week?

Col. A. W. Wilke did it in one day, and in 4 years jumped to almost $100,000 a year. S. E. Gibson jumped his earnings from $150 to $800 a month. O. B. Sheppard says it was worth more than $15,000 to him. Let me send you my secret of earning more money, to try 5 days Free. All you risk is a 2-cent stamp.

By A. L. PELTON

MY name is Pelton—Albert L. Pelton. Four years ago I was as poor as a church mouse. I was out of a job, $300 in debt, and my wife and two children were living on starvation rations. Yes, I've known the bitterest kind of want.

Today I have money and all that money will buy. I have my own home. I have no worries about high prices of food or clothing or rent.

Even if I never make another nickel, I don't think I will ever have to worry about money matters.

During the past three years I have been making on an average of over a thousand dollars a week.

That's quite a change from the time I was "on my uppers," isn't it?

Now let me tell you how I did it.

You will probably think I'm funny when I tell you that for twelve years I held in my hand the secret that at last won me riches.

But it's true.

For twelve years I struggled—with gold right in my hand.

It was this way:

I used to sell books—from door to door—eking out a poor man's living.

One of the books I sold was written by Dr. Frank Channing Haddock.

I never thought much about the book—although I sold a few from week to week.

For twelve years I never even took the trouble to read it.

It was called "Power of Will."

I didn't know anything about will-power.

What's more, I didn't care.

I thought it might be a good book for fellows who *had* to read it.

But I was too busy earning a living to bother about will-power.

Probably I thought then, as tens of thousands think today, who've heard and read about this great book—that "will-power" was some myth, or impractical thing for dreamers.

You see—I hadn't analyzed the lives of the world's greatest men then, and discovered that will-power is the mightiest force men have ever known.

I was fooling myself—cheating myself fearfully, as I found out later.

One day I ran across a man who had purchased the book from me a few months back.

He stopped me on the street and said, "Hello, Pelton! Say, I'd like to have another copy of that Haddock book. Can you send it up right away?"

I told him I would. Then I asked him casually if he liked it.

What he told me made me go home and *read* the book myself—for the first time since I began to sell it twelve years before.

That same evening I borrowed $300.

The next day I was in New York.

I secured the exclusive selling rights to the book.

Then I spent $150 for a page "ad" in the *Review of Reviews* magazine.

It brought me about $2,000 in cash.

As fast as the money came in I shot it back into advertising.

When I got $2,500 in cash I bought a half-page "ad" in the Saturday Evening Post.

The first year I spent $50,000 in advertising.

The next year I spent nearly a hundred thousand.

I guess I've spent over half a million dollars since my first $150 "ad," and already 450,000 men and women—including great executives, international diplomats, famous authors, etc., also have taken up this study.

At first some people said I was crazy to advertise that book.

When they found that the book was selling—and

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that I was spending as high as $20,000 *a month* telling people about it, they said I had more nerve than sense.

But, my friend, all this time I was simply taking my own medicine.

I was telling people that the will was the motive power of the brain—that a strong will could batter down every obstacle to success—that weak will-power could be made strong, as easily as the muscles of the arm could be made strong—and that most people had weak wills simply because they didn't *use* their will-power.

I had strengthened my own will and was *using* it when people were calling me "crazy." And it was my *will-power* that people called "nerve."

Anyway, it was the secret of my success. Without it I might still be plodding—still canvassing.

Or even if I had gotten up enough courage to advertise I might have made only a piker's success.

It was my will-power that got me the $300 loan.

It was my will-power that got me exclusive sale of Dr. Haddock's book.

It was my will-power that made me plunge into advertising instead of going slowly.

And finally it was my will-power that made me say to the public—"Send No Money—read 'Power of Will' five days free. Pay me if you decide to keep it. Send it back if you don't want it."

That was a new sort of proposition to most people. They had nothing to lose—and a lot to gain, if the book was worth while.

So the orders came in by the hundreds and then by the thousands.

At times I was 15,000 orders behind—just couldn't print books fast enough.

And letters from readers came pouring in so fast I simply couldn't read them all. Col. A. W. Wilke, of Roscoe, S. D., wrote that one day's study of "Power of Will" netted him $300 cash, and that four years later, by using the methods Haddock formulated, his earnings had risen to nearly $100,000 a year. V. P. Coffin, of Rochester, N. Y., wrote, about *one month* after getting the book, " 'Power of Will' already has produced an increase of $5,000 a year in my income." J. E. Gibson, of San Diego, Cal., said that since reading "Power of Will" his salary jumped from $150 to $800 a month.

Men like Judge Ben Lindsey, Supreme Court Justice Parker, Assistant Postmaster-General Britt, Governor McKelvie of Nebraska, Senator Capper of Kansas, Secretary of Agriculture Meredith, Governor Ferris of Michigan—and a host of other big men show the class of leaders who have studied Haddock's methods.

Surely there must be something in "Power of Will" for you, my reader.

It helped me. It has helped half a million others. I could send you a circular filled with hundreds of letters from readers. But better still, see the book, and read it five days *free.*

All you lose, if you don't think "Power of Will" will increase your earnings, is a two-cent stamp.

It may make $300 for you next week—it might carry you upwards to $50,000 or $100,000 in a few years—I don't know. I do know it has made a lot of money for its readers.

I do know, too, that if you pass this offer by—if you are a scoffer and a doubter—I will lose only the small profit on the sale of a book; but you—you may lose the difference between peanut money and real money.

It costs only a two-cent stamp to mail the coupon.

Don't wait twelve years—as I did. You may have gold within your reach and not know it. Send for "Power of Will" *now.* You've seen my ads before—now answer this one and see if this masterful volume doesn't contain one little push you may need to make your life rosy-red. Begin training your will by sending in the coupon *this very second.*

A. L. PELTON.

PELTON PUBLISHING COMPANY
48-T Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn.

PELTON PUBLISHING COMPANY
48-T Wilcox Block, Meriden, Conn.

You may send me "Power of Will" at your risk. I agree to remit $4.00 or remail the book to you in five days.

Name .....

Address .....

City. .....

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Up from the Depths

The man had killed a man—he had met the girl—a stranger—at half-past one at Rooney's. A crisis came—and under the surface of shame, the souls of each stood forth to sacrifice—to a better, cleaner life. To O. Henry it is given to see beneath the outer darkness—to the soul within. It's not the truth a man tells, but the spirit in which he tells it that counts. That is why O. Henry can write of things not always told with a clean, high spirit. He tells of those who would rather suffer hunger than be bad—and the others.

O. HENRY

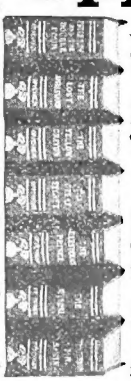
274 Short Stories—One Long Novel

Like the Caliph of ancient Bagdad was O. Henry. He has explored the byways of colorful New York. He has walked the water-front, dropped into strange eating places on the Bowery; he has sat for hours, disguised as a tramp, on a park bench, waiting for the adventure around the corner. And he always found it. The city was his world, and it gave him tribute of rich store of material, unfailing inspiration and the key to that inner life which remains to most of us a sealed book.

From the few who snapped up the first edition at **$125** a set before it was off the press, to the **350,000** who have eagerly sought the beautiful volumes offered you here—from the stylist who sits among his books to the man on the street—the whole nation bows to O. Henry—and hails him, with love and pride, our greatest writer of stories.

E. PHILLIPS Oppenheim

7 VOLUMES FREE



Whether it be in the lonely wastes of the South African veldt—the vague mystery of a London fog—out on the South American pampas—or amid the gay midnight frolics of the Cafe Montmartre in Paris, Oppenheim always has a thrilling, gripping story to tell.

He makes them so real that you forget everything about you in the joy of them. He lets you into secrets that take your breath away. He shows you the real inner workings of European diplomacy. He holds you enthralled with the romance, the mystery of his tale right up to the very last word.

Your Last Chance to Get a Set of Oppenheim FREE

This is the last edition of Oppenheim's works we can get at the special price which permits of our giving them away with O. Henry. When this one edition is gone (and there are only a comparatively few sets now left) you will be able to get Oppenheim's wonderful stories only at their regular price of $1.20 to $2.00 a volume.

Now, while you can, get the O. Henry at the low price with the Oppenheim FREE! Never again can we give you such a chance. Don't miss it. Cut the Coupon. Send it TODAY

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30 Irving Pl.,
New York City

Send me on approval, charges paid by you, O. Henry's works in 12 volumes, bound in silk cloth, with gold tops. Also the 7 volume set of E. Phillips Oppenheim's best stories, bound in cloth. If I keep the books, I will remit $1.50 in 5 days, and then $2.00 a month for 14 months for the O. Henry set only, and keep the 7 volumes of Oppenheim FREE. Otherwise I will, within 10 days, return both sets at your expense.

Name.....
Address.....
Occupation.....

The more sumptuous three-quarter Keratol binding of O. Henry costs only a few cents more a volume and has proved a favorite. For a set of this more luxurious binding, change the terms to $2.00 in 5 days, and then $3.00 a month for 12 months

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What Kind of a Man Are You?

YOU, young or old? In your teens or in your sixties, can you face life day by day, cheerfully, with the stamina to keep going, or to rise to better things? OR, are you held down with the consciousness of your own physical and mental weakness?

YOUNG or old, you will be left behind, among the incompetents, unless you have real HEALTH. No man ever succeeded without it. YOU MADE MISTAKES—so has every man. But the Real Man rises above his mistakes, makes the lesson it gave him serve him to better things. So can you. You don't have to go through life, Weak, Run-down, Nervous, Debilitated, Memory Failing, all Kinks and Pains.

YOU can be Strong, Vigorous, Vital, Manly! The means are here. Let me tell you how.

YOU CAN COME BACK!

I can Re-build you. Make you over again. Re-vitalize you. Fill life with the joyousness of its purpose. I, personally, am the result of the System I have perfected. I live this life, I breathe it, I radiate it to all my pupils, daily and they become as I! I can change your whole life, for the better. I do not care what your physical ills, nor your mental worries, they yield to the Power of Strongfortism, embodying as it does the true principles of Nature's laws. NO DRUGS, OILS, PHYSICS, PILLS or other PIFFLE! Just Nature, her kindly ways, under my personal guidance, and you have the safe, sure, perfect way to HEALTH, Strength, Physical Power, the VIGOR that makes every breath Ecstasy!

I Can Save YOU

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED ENOUGH IN YOURSELF to ask me a few questions. It won't cost you anything. It will not put you under any obligations. Just because you fell, because you made *that* mistake, don't let it drag you down. Don't let it be a millstone about your neck. Tell me in confidence of your physical troubles, no matter what they are and I can advise you and help you wonderfully. Yes, I will give you

ADVICE FREE!

If you knew the work—the wonderful good that I have been doing for so many years you would not wonder why I appeal so strongly to EVERY MAN to come to me and let me help him. This is my life work. It is not a question of money, it is a QUESTION OF HELPING YOU.

Have you ever seen a sculptor at work? With delicate and practiced touch he shapes the ideal he has imaged in his mind. His goal is perfection. He works with the dead clay or marble,—I with the living—but we both have the same end in view, the same sense of artistic proportion. My way is exclusively my own, and I SUCCEED because I realize that every person is different, and each pupil must have individual, personal attention. That too, is why each of my pupils succeeds. I never had a failure. It is the SYSTEM—it is STRONGFORTISM, let me tell you what it will mean to YOU.

CONFIDENTIAL

Friend, whether you have read my Message here for the first time, or whether you have often read it and wondered and doubted—DOUBT NO LONGER—write me all ABOUT YOURSELF, today. I can help you out of your physical ills into the joyous, the Vigorous life you long for.

STRONGFORT
THE PERFECT MAN.

An athlete of whom Dr. Sargent of Harvard University has said:

"He is unquestionably the finest specimen of physical development ever seen."

"Exhibited his wonderful feats before hundreds of thousands on two continents and now teaching thousands how to become better men—better both physically and mentally. As a performer he stood head and shoulders above all competitors—as a teacher he is beyond competition."

To know what Strongfortism can do for you, send for a copy of my book, "PROMOTION AND CONSERVATION OF HEALTH, STRENGTH AND MENTAL ENERGY." IT IS FREE—Just enclose three 2c stamps to cover mailing expenses to get a copy. SEND AT ONCE.

LIONEL STRONGFORT

Physical and Health Specialist

1413 Strongfort Institute NEWARK, N. J.

Founded 1895

FREE CONSULTATION COUPON

Mr. Lionel Strongfort, Newark, N. J.—Please send me your book, **"PROMOTION AND CONSERVATION OF HEALTH, STRENGTH AND MENTAL ENERGY,"** for postage of which I enclose three 2-cent stamps. I have marked (x) before the subject in which I am interested. (1413)

..Colds	..Insomnia	..Week Eyes
..Catarrh	..Short Wind	..Bad Habits
..Asthma	..Flat Feet	..Weaknesses
..Hay Fever	..Stomach Disorders	..Gastritis
..Obesity		..Heartweakness
..Headache	..Constipation	..Poor Circulation
..Thinness	..Biliousness	..Skin Disorders
..Rupture	..Torpid Liver	..Despondency
..Lumbago	..Indigestion	..Round Shoulders
..Neuritis	..Nervousness	..Lung Troubles
..Neuralgia	..Poor Memory	..Increased Height
..Flat Chest	..Rheumatism	..Stoop Shoulders
..Deformity (describe)	..Falling Hair	..Muscular Development

Name.....

Age..... Occupation.....

Street.....

City..... State.....

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A Big Raise in Salary

Is Very Easy to Get, if You Go About It in the Right Way

You have often heard of others who doubled and trebled their salaries in a year's time. You wondered how they did it. Was it a pull? Don't you think it. When a man is hired he gets paid for exactly what he does, there is no sentiment in business. It's preparing for the future and knowing what to do at the right time that doubles and trebles salaries.

Remember When You Were a Kid

and tried to ride a bike for the very first time? You thought that you would never learn and then—all of a sudden you knew how, and said in surprise: "Why it's a cinch if you know how." It's that way with most things, and getting a job with big money is no exception to the rule, if you know how.

We Will Show You How

Without loss to you of a single working hour we can show you a sure way to success and big pay. A large number of men in each of the positions listed are enjoying their salaries because of our help—we want to help you. Make check on the coupon against the job you want and we will help you you get it. Write or print your name on the coupon and send it in today.

American School of Correspondence

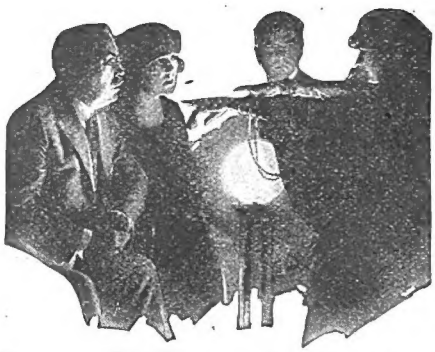
Dept. G-74, Chicago, Ill., U. S. A.

American School of Correspondence,
Dept. G-74, Chicago, Ill.

I want job checked—tell me how to get it.

.....Architect. $5,000 to $15,000	.....Lawyer. $5,000 to $15,000
.....Building Contractor. $5,000 to $10,000	.....Mechanical Engineer. $4,000 to $10,000
..... Automobile Engineer. $4,000 to $10,000	.....Shop Superintendent. $3,000 to $7,000
.....Automobile Repairman. $2,500 to $4,000	.....Employment Manager. $4,000 to $10,000
.....Civil Engineer. $5,000 to $15,000	.....Steam Engineer. $2,000 to $4,000
.....Structural Engineer. $4,000 to $10,000	.....Foreman's Course. $2,000 to $4,000
.....Business Manager. $5,000 to $15,000	.....Photoplay Writer. $2,000 to $10,000
.....Certified Public Accountant $7,000 to $15,000	.....Sanitary Engineer. $2,000 to $5,000
.....Accountant and Auditor. $2,500 to $7,000	.....Telephone Engineer. $2,500 to $5,000
.....Draftsman and Designer. $2,500 to $4,000	.....Telegraph Engineer. $2,500 to $5,000
.....Electrical Engineer. $4,000 to $10,000	.....High School Graduate. In two years.
.....General Education. In one year.	.....Fire Insurance Expert. $3,000 to $10,000

Name..... Address.....



"One of These is Guilty!"

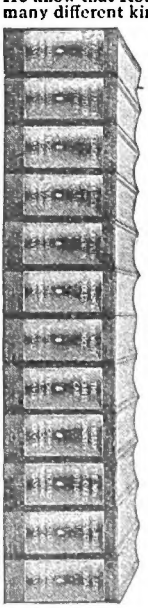
"I see gold—masses of it—shining—glittering. There are two who are fighting for it—a man and a woman. One of them is a thief. There is only one other who knows the truth, and she is long since dead. If I can talk with her spirit——"

The mystery—the romance—the gripping horror of it all makes a story it is impossible to put down until the breathless end. Read it. It's in this set by

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

(First Uniform Edition)

Whether it be the blinding heat of an African desert—a lonesome island in the Pacific—or the deep mystery of a London fog—Davis always had a breathless story to tell. He knew that Romance was not dead. No man ever knew so many different kinds of people. No man ever visited so many strange lands or saw so many wars in so many different places. He was at the Boer War—he was in Cuba—he saw the Russo-Japanese War—he was in Mexico—he was in the Great War. More than ever before Americans love him. His heart flamed against cruelty and injustice—he typifies the spirit with which America went to war.



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No more thoroughly American writer lives today than Gouverneur Morris. Brilliant men—vividly beautiful women—live in his pages. That is because he himself has lived for years among New York's richest, gayest, most fashionable set.

If you want to know the spirit of costly luxury in which certain well-known people live—their colorful adventures in passion and romance—then Gouverneur Morris is for you.

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You must act quickly. How long you can have these books at the present low price we do not know—the cost of paper and cloth is going higher every day. When the present edition runs out we will have to add the extra cost of paper to the price. Make sure of your splendid set at the little price. Mail the coupon today. Forget the monotony—the dullness of everyday life. Go with him into the land of romance.

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
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Send me, all charges prepaid, complete set of Richard Harding Davis, in 12 volumes. Also send absolutely FREE the set of Gouverneur Morris, in 4 volumes. If these books are not satisfactory I will return both sets within 10 days, at your expense. Otherwise, I will send you $1.00 at once and $2.00 a month for 13 months. For cash deduct 10%.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation..... AFF 11-20

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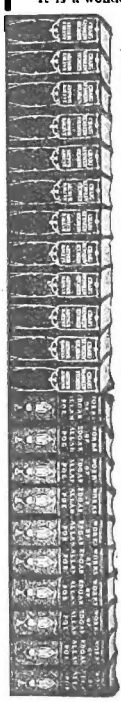

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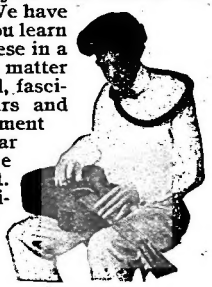

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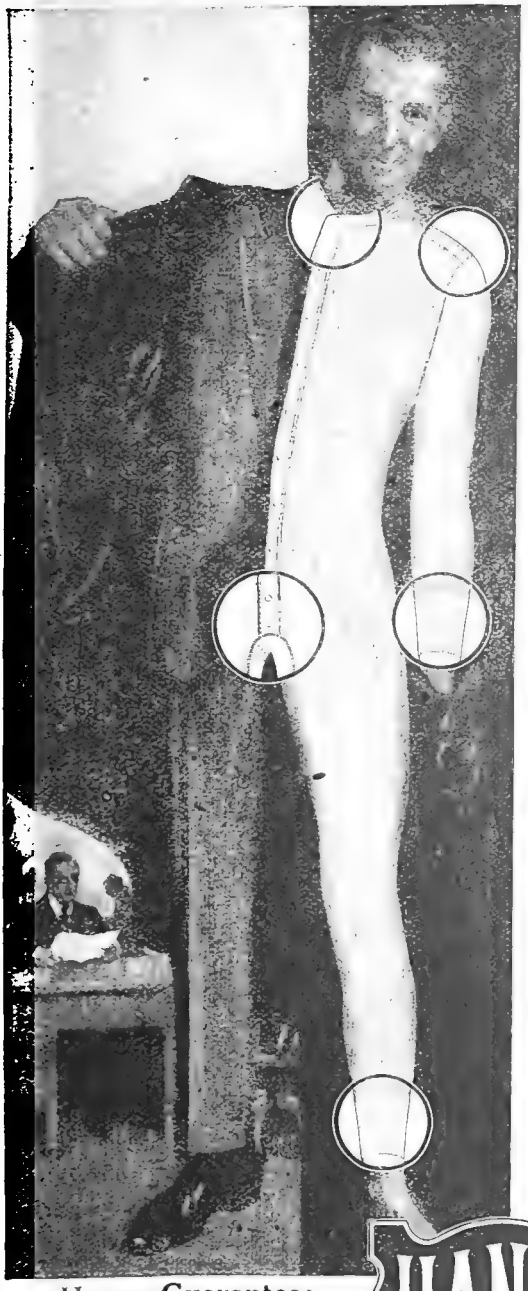

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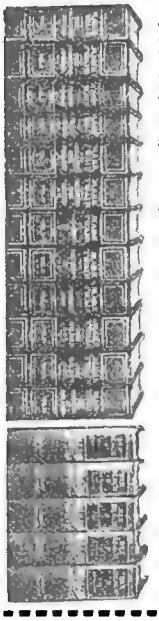

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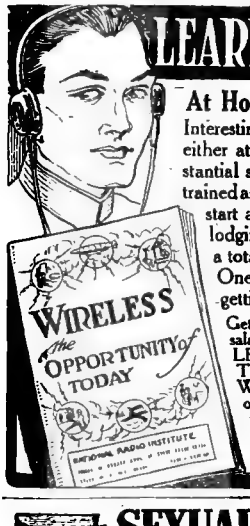

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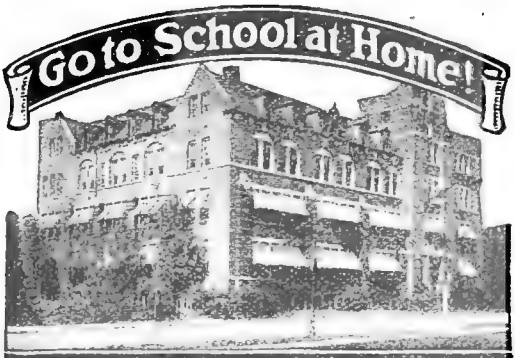

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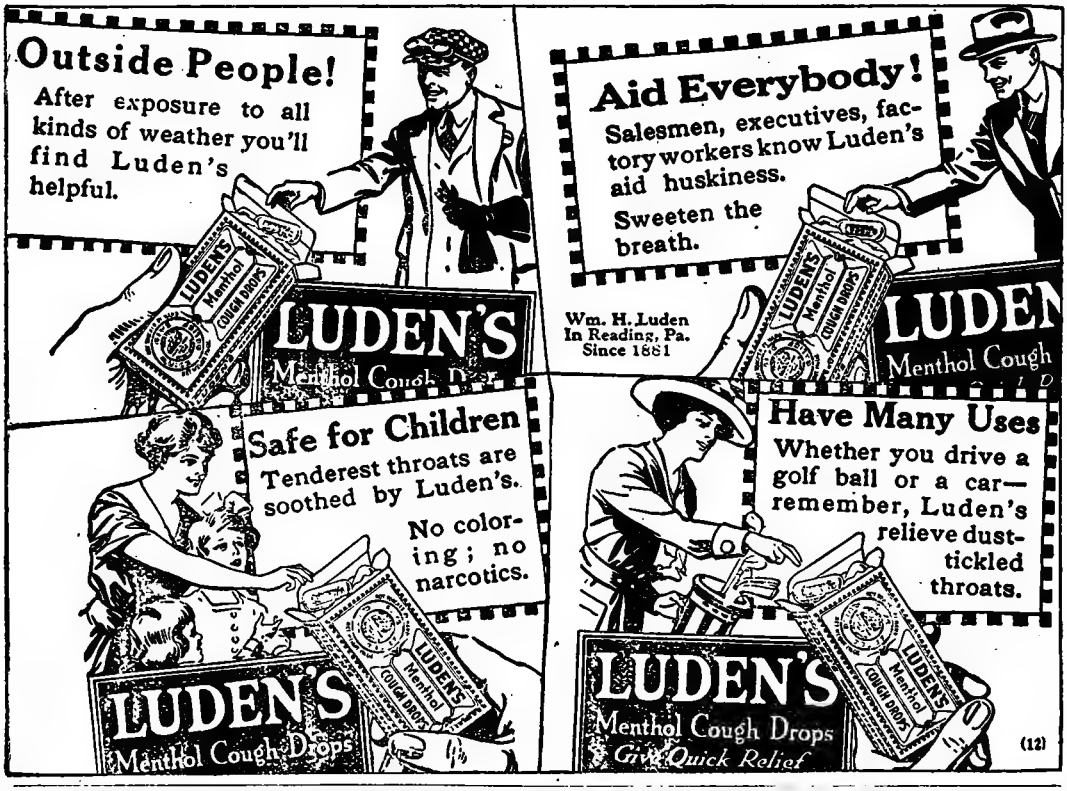

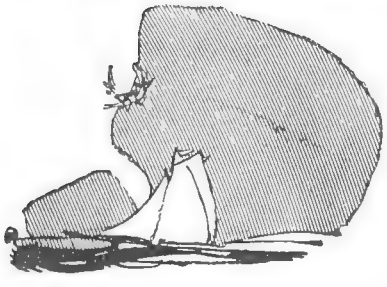

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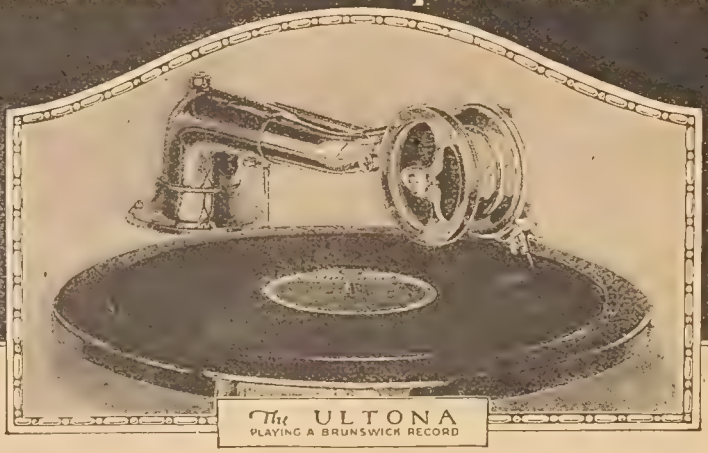

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INTO the vast cattle country of the Northwest pour the homesteaders; and the battle for justice and peace is on. "The Law Comes to Singing River," a novel of the Sweetgrass Hills, by Robert J. Horton, complete in our next issue.

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THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

Adventure

MID-NOVEMBER
1920
VOL XXVII No4

The Dragon Speaks

A Complete Novelette

by Robert J Pearsall

Author of "Intrigue," "The Escape," etc.

WISDOM and folly, truth and wickedness, have come from the lips of oracles since man first stared in amazement at the sunrise; nor is the time yet come when the cunning shall cease to lead the simple by signs and wonders.

Mighty also is the power of a symbol; and Koshinga—autocrat of the revolutionary Ko Lao Hui society and world-menace—was himself a symbol, as will appear later. A very clever symbol of that world dominion which he craved, and to which he had been dedicated by another will than his—a most masterful human will, long dead.

And it would have been odd if upon the path that had been laid out for him by that other will, there hadn't appeared that greater symbol, the sprawling dragon. With all China fermenting with mingled expectancy and dread of Koshinga's coming and the beginning of the great world contest, it would have been strange if that grotesque messenger of the gods hadn't reared its rather horrible head above the horizon of the people's imagination, even if that imagination hadn't been stimulated by prophecy.

But there was a reason why Hazard and I believed that Koshinga would never use that particular device for enchanting Oriental wisdom into foolishness. We were wrong in that belief; and the beginning of it all was the wail of a beggar woman one Summer night in the streets of Peking.

"*Mao ch'ien, mao ch'ien!* A copper *tungtse*, that Kwanin may bless your fireside! A copper *tungtse*, rich *kweitzu*, honorable foreign mandarin! *Mao ch'ien, mao ch'ien!*"

She continued to dog us intolerably close, even though she had already received alms from us. Again she caught at Hazard's elbow with her broken-nailed, prehensile fingers, dirty beyond belief.

She was persistent beyond the custom of her kind, and there was danger in that persistence. There were reasons why Hazard and I, in those days, desired inconspicuousness above most things. But if we had ignored her or driven her away, we should hardly have been worthy of the task we had set for ourselves. One gathers where one may, and perhaps this beggar woman had something to give us.

Beggars and innkeepers are the eyes of the world, runs the saying; and the society of mendicants called the Ki Mao Fan are not the least wise of mankind.

Wherefore Hazard glanced over his shoulder, thrusting his hand into his pocket again, so that any one who watched might think him merely a prodigal almsgiver. I followed his

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example so that—since we passed at that moment under a street light—we got our first fair look at the woman's face, and gave her a first fair look at us.

Black-bearded and scarlet turbaned were we, with hands and faces dyed coffee-color, and with our lean figures clothed in cheap khaki that smacked in cut of the Sikh police; but we held no great advantage over the woman in that exchange of scrutinies. Wisps of black hair too heavy for one of her class straggled over her face, and behind that hair were discolored plasters that made patchwork of her features. She stared up at us sharply and whined out thanks; but at the end of her beggar's formula she threw in without pausing two startling compounded words that seemed to be half-assertion and half-inquiry.

"Hazlad-Patlidge! Hazlad-Patlidge!"

The yellow traffic was thick. The swarming passers-by jostled us, peering at us with slant eyes in which there was more hostility than there had been yesterday, as yesterday's hostility had exceeded that of the day before. We could imagine some of them whispering to each other that grim motto of the Ko Lao Hui, "Destroy the foreigner, exalt the Chinese," which was already becoming a byword even in modernized Peking. It was no place for our names to be spoken, and Hazard and I turned away with one movement.

Yet neither was it a time to ignore one who knew those names, which would probably have been our death-warrant if spoken aloud; and as Hazard turned he jerked his hand forward invitingly.

Leading off Hattamen Street to the east are many black and narrow alleys, muddy in the Summer months and usually empty, bordered by the unbroken rear walls of dwelling-houses. Presently we had entered one of those alleys. Ahead of us an empty rickshaw sloshed toward us through the mud. We went on until it had passed us, and then stopped with our backs against a mud-brick wall and waited for the beggar woman.

"What do you want?" I asked bruskly in Pekingese.

The beggar woman cackled sillily. Then in a barely audible whisper—

"Name of Sha Feng requires your help."

Sha Feng! No name she could have mentioned could have startled us more. I asked her sharply what she knew of Sha Feng.

"That he needs your help. Will you give it?"

She silenced me with that question. I stared at the black splotch in the darkness which was now all that I could see of her, trying to judge what I should say.

Certainly we would help Sha Feng, but why should he send such a messenger? Of all Chinese I have ever met, I think Sha Feng was the one I most admired. A man without fear, a patriot who knew no stint of sacrifice, such he had proved himself as a leader of the Ke Ming Tang that had overthrown the Manchus, freed the Chinese and established the Republic.

And now he was engaged in the equally hazardous work of preserving that Republic; he was our colleague in the secret warfare against the disruptive and revolutionary Ko Lao Hui, and its insidious leader, Koshinga.

More than ordinarily clever in that work, by what we had learned, although he was middle-aged, languid in manner, indirect and circuitous in conversation. He was sprung from old China, but he was zealous for the new. Just now he was engaged in a bit of work so superlatively important that I tingled at the possibilities suggested by his message.

But was it his message? It had already been doubtful; and now came a memory of a certain arrangement that had been made between Sha Feng and us, that made it seem impossible.

"But the sign?" I asked. "Sha Feng would have sent a sign."

The woman hesitated before answering, and her hand went to her throat.

"There was no sign. There was but this message for help."

"How are we to help him?" asked Hazard.

"By following your miserable servant where she shall lead you."

HER voice was growing timid, frightened and grievously distressed—emotions that are rare indeed in Chinese beggars, who have so little to lose in life and so little to gain. I doubted if she really belonged to the beggars' clan; and if Sha Feng had sent us a message, he would certainly have also sent the simple signal upon which we had agreed and which would have ensured its authenticity. Plainly the woman was lying, and yet . . .

And yet she had knowledge that none outside the official class was supposed to have. Knowledge that, if but spoken aloud in the tea-houses, would certainly mean an end to Hazard and me, and probably to Sha Feng, too. That is, she knew our names and business.

"'Sheep choose their guide lightly, and go easily over the precipice!'" Hazard quoted a saying of the woman's race. But immediately he revealed that he shared my own perplexity by asking—

"Where would you take us?"

"My masters know the House of the Myriad Lights. It is there that Sha Feng waits you, having need of you. Now that I have told you, you may go alone; but if your exalted wills permit, I would go with you."

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"It is true that we know the place," muttered Hazard.

"Listen!" I put in, both favorably impressed and still further puzzled by her desire to accompany us. "There is a good reason why it seems to us that your tongue is scattering falsehoods. But if you will give us cause to believe you, perhaps we will go with you."

Again the woman hesitated, seeming to weigh her arguments.

"If I come not from Sha Feng, how is it that I know that which no one is supposed to know, save the honorable foreign mandarins themselves and Sha Feng, and one other? How is it that I know that the business of Sha Feng in the House of the Myriad Lights is to win back to the Republic that treasure which Koshinga has taken from the people by force, and which is the greatest single treasure in all the world?"

Hazard seldom shows astonishment; but I wasn't surprized to feel him start at that. That was truly Sha Feng's present business; and it was also true that everything about the quest for Koshinga's stolen loot had been kept the closest of official secrets. How, indeed, had the woman learned it unless Sha Feng had told her? But on the other hand I couldn't imagine Sha Feng telling her, or any one else outside officialdom.

I could far more easily imagine that some of the Ko Lao Hui, perhaps Koshinga himself, had discovered our identities, surmised the relations between Sha Feng and ourselves, suspected Sha Feng's present business, and sent this woman to us with a false message to get us into their power. It was a thing that I now may boast of, that there were no other two men in the world whom Koshinga desired so greatly to get into his hands. And it was very probable that Koshinga was still in Peking.

"And yet," questioned Hazard with open disbelief, "Sha Feng didn't trust you with the one sign that would have put your words beyond doubt?"

The woman was silent for a still longer interval, probably realizing that she had lost rather than gained ground with us. And then, in the slightest of whispers:

"The honorable mandarins will be told my name, which is Tsai Mu'i. And if they will listen, I will also tell them——"

The truth? A certain change in her tone made me think so, while at the same time it strengthened my belief that heretofore she hadn't told it. But at that moment she was interrupted in a manner that would have very much startled and bewildered Hazard and me a year ago, but which was now very nearly self-explanatory. We had learned during that time that there were few criminals outside the ranks of the Ko Lao Hui, and few crimes committed that were not directed by Koshinga, who sat in the center of his vast web of villainy, directing everything.

There came from somewhere in the dark huddle of houses beyond the alley the sharp twang of a bow and the thin whistle of an arrow; and almost instantly that arrow shivered to bits against the mud wall behind us. And if the point of that arrow was not steeped in venom, if it had not been directed by one of Koshinga's many facile assassins, then I missed my first guess widely.

If it had been sent against Hazard or me, it wouldn't of course have been a matter for wonder, though we had believed, until our recognition by the woman, that Sha Feng was the only one in Peking who knew of our disguise. And the fact that it passed within an inch of the woman's shoulder, and a safe foot from Hazard's head, might have meant nothing but poor aim; nor was it at all strange that she should cry out in terror at such a narrow escape. But it was more than strange that her terror should express itself in these words:

"Ah! Li Fu Ching! Li Fu Ching has traced me——"

She choked back the rest of her cry, which was clearly unpremeditated. And Li Fu Ching was head of the Peking branch of the Ko Lao Hui! If the hidden archer was Li Fu Ching's agent, he was also Koshinga's; if the woman was Li Fu Ching's enemy to the extent of attempted assassination, then it was very likely that she was our friend even if she had lied to us in part.

The next instant the three of us were scurrying toward Hattamen. Our flight must have put us instantly out of range of the archer, by placing some one of the mud hovels between him and us, for no more arrows came. Here was more evidence that the would-be assassin had intended but a single shot, and hence had in mind but a single victim—the woman. Although I still discredited altogether her claim to be Sha Feng's messenger, by the time we reached the broader, crowded street I was of the opinion that we might do well to trust her at least a little way.

It was then, when we tried to lose ourselves in the crowd that surrounded the booth of a story-teller, that I caught a glimpse of a certain white man's face that had become in the last few days disagreeably familiar to me. A pair of overbright, staring eyes gleamed above the throng of shorter people—eyes that were set in features of rather unique cast, forehead too high for its width, nose strong and sweeping, chin too weak. A face natively passionate, intelligent, unbalanced of will, over which a veil of horror had recently dropped, almost extinguishing the light of reason.

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That was my impression of this man, who was very cheaply clothed in a white linen suit of native manufacture, and who I had come to suspect was following Hazard and me. Now there was something in his look that made me suspect it no longer; I knew. I knew he had been waiting for us to come out of that alley.

One glimpse, that was all I had of him, like my dozen previous glimpses of him whose life course had for a long time been slowly drawing closer to ours, with which it was to blend that night to an end that no one could have foreseen. There was an unoccupied Peking cart creeping past the skirt of the crowd. Hazard hailed it, and we climbed in, taking with us the woman who had called herself Tsai Mu'i.

Perhaps it was the sight of us, who were foreigners if not by appearance white, that made some one in the crowd start to hum with an air of furtive but defiant animosity:

"From the dim darkness
Comes now a mighty one,
Giver of power to the children of Han;
Foretold his greatness,
Son of the master's son,
Blood of all races, and ruler of men."

"Aye!" muttered a long-haired Po-Bon priest in a gloomy gown, passing close to the singer. "But first must speak the messenger of the great Old Ones, who is the dragon with the talking tongue."

II

THREE ride with difficulty in even the largest of Peking carts, but it may be done, and the hooded vehicle makes for concealment. And Hazard and I had decided in a few whispered words as we passed through the crowd that our first business was to get away from this spot as inconspicuously as possible, and our next to investigate the truth of Tsai Mu'i's story.

"To the North Gate," Hazard murmured in the driver's ear. Beyond that gate lay the House of the Myriad Lights mentioned by the woman, which house had even before that night prodded our curiosity rather sharply.

This was its history, so far as ascertained by us, whose business it was to ascertain everything that was unusual. The house had been built about six months before by a certain Ho Pu Bon, who had so far as any one could tell us dropped into Peking from the sky. His credentials were his money, of which he seemed to have an unlimited supply. Hazard and I had seen him several times. He was a fat, pompous, upper-class ruffian with an oily face, who looked as if he might have retired from the governorship of some province after a lifetime of dishonest gains.

His house was one of a small colony recently built by wealthy Chinese in the low foothills well outside the north wall of Peking. It lay, however, a little farther to the north than the rest of them; and was otherwise distinguished by being equipped with a complete electric lighting system, drawing its current from the city's new power-plant. Hundreds of electric globes formed a sheen of light that hung over the place at night like an aureole; and it was of course this that gave the house its name.

A striking name enough; but not as striking as would have been given the house anywhere else than in Peking, where, of all Chinese cities, East and West most distinctly meet. For evidence of which fact Hazard and I had only to part the curtains of our stuffy, bumping box-on-wheels and look out upon the traffic of which it was a part.

The bulk of that traffic was as it had been for a thousand years—palanquins and shoulder-borne chairs, coolies singing under incredible loads, gabardined merchants with hands inside ample sleeves, shaven-pated monks, itinerant tinkers and pedlers, with whistles of differing notes. Here was an open-fronted tea-house wherein men stripped to the waist ate and drank unimaginable things, while barbers shaved their faces and scraped their eyelids. And here was a joss-house with an open space in front in which conjurers and story-tellers entertained silent, staring crowds of yellow folk. Round about stood crumbling statues of twisted lions with mouths like frogs; and by the looks of them, the crowds and the conjurers might have stood there since the building of those statues.

But here, too, was an automobile. It came chugging up the street, driven recklessly as Chinese drive, scattering everything to right and left, forcing to skip for his life an old gentleman with sparse, white beard, who had stepped from his palanquin to buy from a pedler a cage of crickets to be used in fighting, while wagers were laid on the results. And it was by electric lights that we saw all this, saw the women with their unbound feet, the younger men dapper in foreign clothing, the smart company of troops modernly equipped, that crossed a corner ahead of us.

What I am saying is that the ultimately inevitable had arrived: that China was accepting civilization; was to be made powerful by machinery.

The East was stretching out its yellow hand to the West, accepting what it had to give. With what intention?

The snarling, scaly horror called the dragon, whose qualities no man knew, was to take its place among the symbols of Empire. What word would the dragon bring from the realms of myth?

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To my mind the answer to that question most certainly depended upon the secret struggle that was now in progress all over Asia, between the forces of the new-born Republic and the sinister power of the Ko Lao Hui. There was no doubting the stranglehold of that society, whose master was Koshinga and whose creed was Force, upon Chinese society. There was no doubting that Koshinga, who had so far kept pretty well hidden behind the yellow cloud of his followers, might soon be writing his name in characters of blood over all of Asia.

Hazard and I did not need to be reminded of that grisly probability, for it had obsessed our minds for a year; but there had been few days of late that had been free from reminders. The ferment was growing. All over China the long-planned, long-threatened revolution hung like an avalanche trembling in equilibrium, which a single word might release. And though Oriental craft and cunning controlled the whole, such a poised and tremendous force must betray itself. For instance tonight. . . .

Presently, from somewhere in the clutter of dwelling-houses to the east, there came the sound of singing. Strong and bold it came, with shrill, cruel yelpings in between, and a yammering as of tigers; one of the many variations of that old, old song of the Ko Lao Hui, which now seemed dangerously near to becoming the folk-song of the Chinese people. Its most terrible idioms are untranslatable, and one can not put down on paper the malign force and fury of its rendering. But we heard it something like this, in snatches:

Sharpen your knives,
Sons of the Dragon;
Kindle your hate,
Children of Han.
Whet the steel, the vultures come.
Light the brand, Koshinga is calling.
Sharpen your knives, sons of the Dragon;
Kindle your hate, children of Han.

The black cloud gathers over the world.
Soon it shall be as red as blood running warm.
Dragons will then come out of the earth,
Truth-telling dragons with words in their mouths,
Hailing Koshinga, praising Koshinga,
Who was Lao-Tse and Gautama also,
Who will rule all things.

He who was promised,
Whose engines break down the fences of the world,
Whose breath consumes the dwelling-places of princes,
Who spares neither for pity nor fear,
Who will give the sons of Han dominion.
Hail Koshinga.

Then strong be your hate,
Sons of the Dragon;
Strong be your swords,
Children of Han.
For hate is at the bottom of all things.
This the new wisdom, this the new teaching—
Power is the food of the gods.
Be even as they, under Koshinga,
Ruling all things, enduring forever.
Strike, strike, strike——

As if the wind had shifted, bearing the sound away from us, the words became fainter and hardly distinguishable. But the song continued in a great roaring sequence of barbaric chanting, interspersed with falsetto yelling. It was an ominous beginning of our night's work. Hazard, jammed in by my side with Tsai Mu'i in front of us, stirred restlessly.

"At last!" he whispered in English. "At last it's come to Peking."

"They're bold," I said. "A detachment of troops——"

"Would find nothing," asserted Hazard. "An empty compound perhaps, and smiling Chinese all around who had heard nothing. Even the loyal don't dare speak. They know Koshinga's punishments too well."

"It's a reign of fear," I said prosaically.

"Yes. Fear—I'm pretty well afraid myself, Partridge. For I'm afraid the storm can't hold off much longer. Riots all over, mysterious deaths and disappearances of loyal officers, crimes of such magnitude that no one could think of them but Koshinga, local uprisings and guild troubles; and now it's starting in the very shadow of the Government House. Things are due to break, one way or the other"

"The Government's strong," I said.

"For a fledgling government, yes. The saner people are back of it, and the more honest. But because of its very good qualities it has its enemies other than Koshinga. The priesthood for instance. That is, the decadent three-quarters of the priesthood."

"About this affair tonight" I inquired. "What do you make of it?"

"Well, it's hard to say," replied Hazard. "We've this much of fact to go on. We know what Sha Feng's present business is; to find the money Koshinga has accumulated for his war-fund by extortion from the people. A sum so enormous that its withdrawal from the currency of China makes the Republic a secret bankrupt and Koshinga the real money-king of the East. And we know that money's somewhere around Peking, or at least we're pretty sure of it. It's all in bullion, and bullion's hard to move. And of course Koshinga had it close at hand when——"

HE PAUSED. Early in the trip we had tested both Tsai Mu'i and the driver to see if they understood English. There was no danger from them; but we had both been requested, and had solemnly

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promised, never while Koshinga lived to let pass our lips any reference to Koshinga's recent attempted master-stroke of capturing practically the entire government of China while it was assembled in the Government House discussing measures against him.

It wasn't politic to let the public know how very nearly he had succeeded. But I understood Hazard's reference. Money is the best backer of power even in the Orient; Koshinga might have needed it to bolster up the one-man Government that he had planned to establish on the ruins of the Republic; and he would have had it near.

"Then there's the dope we've picked up," Hazard went on thoughtfully. "Indefinite enough, most of it. I wish I understood the meaning of that street-saying that seems to be so common: 'The treasure of Koshinga will be found only under the waters of death.' But I'm wandering. The point is, if this message really is from Sha Feng, it's probably in connection with his search for the treasure."

Hazard spoke without enthusiasm, a lack that I'd noticed in him before when discussing Sha Feng's quest.

"But I don't see why he should send for us," I objected. "Why not the Government House, if he needed help? As soon as we get rid of the carter I'm going to try finding out what else she knows, that she hasn't told us," and I glanced toward the woman.

"She'll tell us only what she wants to, for she's Chinese. And since Sha Feng's Chinese too it's likely even she doesn't know much."

"Well, we'll hope for the best," I said, parting the sections of the hood and looking out again. Hazard leaned over and peered out also. We were just then passing the great Lama Temple, filled with innumerable images of that Chinese Pantheon in which the people were so rapidly losing faith—creation of a vicious and grasping priesthood whose power was passing.

"I don't know," replied Hazard slowly, "that it would be best for Sha Feng to get hold of that treasure just now."

"Why on earth—" I began, astonished at that avowal.

"Because of this," said Hazard. "Remember the song we've just heard. 'Koshinga, who was Lao-Tse, and Gautama also.' And remember that the prophecy to which those words refer is supposed to come true just two months from yesterday. And in a place the location of which no one knows except the leaders of the Ko Lao Hui—the long-lost Sacred Pass."

"But we've agreed," I said, "that that is one of the Ko Lao Hui prophecies that will never be fulfilled. That Koshinga will refuse to jeopardize his power——"

"But he's permitting his followers to continue to believe it. He's permitting that song to be sung, as it's been sung for centuries. Still, I agree that Koshinga will never join forces with the priesthood unless he is compelled to. But a desperate man will do anything; a desperate egotist like Koshinga would pull the world down on his own head. That last defeat hurt him; so did the blocking of the revolution in Kiang-si.

"He's been balked everywhere lately. If I know him at all, his temper's on a hair-trigger; but he'll never pull the revolution until he's sure of at least temporary success. And the support of the Taoist and Buddhist hierarchies would give him that surety, and a holocaust of humanity that would satisfy even him. Only, wouldn't the loosed forces be too strong even for him?

"That's his fear, I think; but if he loses this war-fund that's cost him years of extortion to accumulate, I think he'll decide to take a chance. So I'd as lief its recovery would be postponed until there's no chance of his springing the trick—until there's no chance of his proving, in whatever way that it's been determined for him to prove it, that he's the incarnated spiritual authority of the East."

"The successor of the gentle Buddha and the philosophic Lao-Tse," I mused. "Heavens, Hazard, when I think of it and of what it would mean—certainly the rule of his Satanic Majesty in Asia for a while anyway—why, it's impossible!"

"Well, the Tai-ping Rebellion must have also seemed pretty incredible before it happened," returned Hazard grimly. "Millions killed because one Chinaman proclaimed himself the yellow Christ. No, in Asia nothing's impossible that relates to fanaticism. And there never was such a rallying point for fanaticism in the world's history as this Koshinga—never! The Government will hold off, too, until it's too late. It's afraid to interfere with the priests."

"I know. I wasn't doubting. I was only permitting myself the luxury of a Western view-point for a minute. By the way, Hazard, that white man we were talking about yesterday, the one who seems to be tortured by fear or something—he's still following us. He saw us get into this cart."

"The devil he did," said Hazard. "I wonder if — But here we are at the North Gate."

Conversation was naturally ended until we had passed through that gate, which was guarded by trim Chinese sentries, standing with soldierly erectness in the shadow of the great Tatar wall, fifty feet high. So we passed into the comparatively uncrowded section of the city outside that wall—a place of trees and of great, quiet compounds lying dark under a quiet sky jeweled with millions of starry points.

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There seemed something contradictory in that sight. It seemed hard to reconcile the vast, eternal calm of those heavens with the mad passions of the tiny men who lived under them, such as were expressed in the song we had just heard, such as have from the beginning of man's time on earth given rise to such ruthless ambitions as the one we were combating.

But I reflected that somehow in the scheme of things they must be reconciled, since they both exist; and now as we turned a corner of the twisting road we saw a little ahead of us the dark contour of the foot-hills; and in the midst of them an earth-born glittering that fairly rivaled those stars.

"The House of the Myriad Lights indeed," I whispered. "They're still going, and it's well past midnight. Ho Pu Bon likes his display."

"I wonder if it's merely display," questioned Hazard.

"One thing," I said; "before we come to it, I'm going to have another try at getting Tsai Mu'i to speak."

But I didn't succeed. It was after we had dismissed the carter, a little distance from the house, that I again questioned her. She responded by developing a complete inability to understand me at all; she was, as Hazard had said, a Chinese. It was hard to understand her silence, if she were really Sha Feng's messenger. However, she had had her way with us. We had gone too far to withdraw now.

Was she indeed a beggar woman? There had been many signs besides her agility in entering and leaving the cart that increased my doubt of it.

But presently when we reached the gate of that brilliantly illuminated compound we found matters for greater wonder.

III

SHA FENG may have invited us here, but Sha Feng was not here to receive us. Nor, it seemed, was any one else. The gate was open. The porter's lodge was empty. The grounds inside the gate were sprinkled with softly glowing incandescent globes. And the place was silent—silent as an empty tomb.

"Now this," murmured Hazard, "is quite the queerest thing yet."

And after we had passed through the second gate, moving as if every shadow concealed a menace, as if an enemy lurked behind every shrub and grotesquely shaped statue, I echoed him.

"A rich Chinese household without servants! But it's impossible. Is the household itself here?"

"God knows what—" began Hazard.

And then he was checked by something that, breaking into the eerie silence, made the hair on the back of my neck to stir a little, and drew from Tsai Mu'i a low, poignant cry. Sharp and full of fear was that cry, but I would have sworn that it was not fear for herself—a strange sound to come from the lips of one who might be supposed to be deadened by suffering. But I paid her little attention in the sudden compelling mystery of what we had heard.

From somewhere ahead of us had come a man's scream, chopped off instantly. A death-cry, I was sure. There was an echo flung back by the cliff, which the artificial light made visible, hanging like a threat over the rear of the house. Then that unnatural silence settled down again, oppressive, even appalling.

"Sha Feng?" I muttered in a whisper.

"If it was, he had need of help and he needs it no more. But let's hope— Well, forward!"

He went on, taking Tsai Mu'i between us. If she was a friend, she deserved protection; if she was not, she needed watching. Once I took her by the elbow to assist her up some steps, and for the first time noticed how rounded and soft her arm was under the ragged sleeve. I thought she was trembling; but there was nothing significant about that. The chilly hand of King Fear had touched all three of us.

And still we went on. With Hazard and me, in our long matching of wits against Koshinga, courage was always bolstered up by the thought of the enormity of the evil we combated. But with the woman it was different. What was it that drove her forward in spite of her terror? What was it that had driven her earlier in the evening to brave Li Fu Ching's assassins?

We passed through the third gate. Beyond this gate began the low, sprawling dwelling-rooms of the place, stone-walled, interspersed with garden spaces. Indeed, the whole place was really a garden, of which these rooms were a part.

We moved with the extreme of caution from room to room, finding much in the way of arrangement and furnishings which we might have admired under other circumstances. But now the furnishings impeded our search, and the artful arrangement confused us; so that we worked through them for perhaps half an hour and found nothing but signs of very recent occupancy.

And everywhere lights—lights, and the haunting shadow of tragedy betokened by that eerie cry.

So we searched fruitlessly until we had come nearly to the rear of the house. Finally we entered a bedroom opening off the one fairly continuous corridor. Against the farther wall of this room was a large teakwood bed, every inch of which was exquisitely carved. Upon

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a Chinese chair near this bed lay a complete outfit of mandarin garments—gown, undervest, loose silk trousers, underwear, silk-topped felt slippers, everything—all flung down there carelessly as if their owner had hastily disrobed.

"Hum!" muttered Hazard, fingering the fluffy pile. "Now how many days, hours or minutes have these lain here? It's minutes;" he answered his own question. "For see, this fold hasn't had time to settle normally, nor this one."

True, the silks lay all too loosely to have been there long.

"Now, if we can find out who discarded these—" and I started to search the garments hurriedly. Presently I made a find, and another one; and Hazard and I studied them together.

An envelope full of railway and steamship tickets, and a letter. The tickets were properly viséd, and were issued in the name of Ho Pu Bon, owner of all this magnificence; they called for first-class transportation from Peking to Tientsin, Tientsin to Kobe, Kobe to San Francisco.

The letter was written in Chinese, which Hazard understood but indifferently. I whispered the substance of it to him. A certain Peking guild of carters acknowledged the receipt of an order from Ho Pu Bon, and assured him that ten freighting carts would arrive at the House of the Myriad Lights early on the morning which would in a few hours dawn.

We put the tickets and letter back where we had got them and tiptoed out of the room. I had got very little out of them, save that Ho Pu Bon had been in the house but a short while ago, and was probably here still, alive or dead; but Hazard's eyes were gleaming like steel.

I had, of course, connected Ho Pu Bon with the cry we had heard, either as assailant or assailed; but I think Hazard's mind had already leaped past that conclusion. I think he already surmised the one great motivating cause which lay behind all the curious circumstances of the night, to which must now be added Ho Pu Bon's solitary stay in a house from which he had driven every one else. But even Hazard could not foresee our next find.

WE STOLE down the corridor, with our revolvers in our hands, and with Tsai Mu'i following us mutely. Every step we took with trepidation. Now and then, at a silent signal from Hazard, we stopped sharply, hoping to surprize and discover any one who might be trying to cover his own movements by the sound of ours. But we heard nothing. Except for that seeming death-cry we heard nothing in all our passage through the house. And that was at least strange, for where was the assailant of whomever had been struck down?

Presently we came to what we judged to be the rearmost room of the house. It was much larger than those we had inspected before, softly matted, set about with teakwood benches; illuminated with many electric lights arranged around its wooden walls.

In the middle of the room was a great circular bathing-pool, perhaps forty feet across. Just to the right of the door by which we entered the room from a rather dark corridor were the steps and upper end of a diving-chute, which curved down until its lower end dipped into the pool.

"Ah!" grunted Hazard as he stepped inside the room. "Modernized, modernized. There aren't ten such homes in— What's that?"

I heard Tsai Mu'i whimper aloud; I heard that whimper change into a sob of relief. I followed Hazard's look and saw a dark, huddled something lying on the matting very close to the water's edge.

MY FIRST thought was that if it was a dead body, it could not be Sha Feng's, for it was too great in girth.

We walked over to it quickly. The dead man lay on his face. When we turned him over, the contorted face of Ho Pu Bon stared up at us.

"Ah!" whispered Hazard. "It needed just this to——"

Upon his face was a queer mingling of exultation and depression. It was as if he saw a little ahead of us a triumph which would ultimately prove a disaster. And that look, which I did not at all understand, remained on his face through our examination of the body, with its bewildering results.

We had half-expected that underneath the flowered dressing-gown the body would be found nude, prepared for the bath which the man had evidently been about to take. But what we could not have expected and could not explain was that from head to heels there was no mark on Ho Pu Bon's body to show the cause of his death.

"And yet," said Hazard a moment later, "to judge from the cry we heard, death must have been practically instantaneous. There's no poison that I ever heard of that would act so quickly. Besides, how could he have been been poisoned? Certainly not subcutaneously, not by means of any weapon, for there's no weapon but leaves a mark. And yet the blow must have been delivered here, on this spot. None but a perfectly well man goes for a midnight bath. And then——"

Hazard paused, for once utterly at sea.

"Well," I put in, "it strikes me that this

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midnight bath is about as hard to explain as the killing. It's not like a Chinaman."

"And particularly," said Hazard, "it's not like a man of any race who had on his mind what Ho Pu Bon had on his."

We were talking, of course, in the most cautious of tones, but Hazard's voice was still queerly elated.

"I don't get you," I replied. "What do you mean?"

Hazard's brows came together swiftly, as if he were concentrating on the effort to present a whole argument in a few sentences.

"I mean that the constant temptation to acquire almost inconceivable wealth will drive even a Chinaman mad. I mean that Koshinga's hoard is here, in this house; that it was placed in Ho Pu Bon's custody, and that Ho Pu Bon planned to make away with it.

"Evidence number one, our summons here by Sha Feng, whose one present object in life is to recover that money. Number two, Ho Pu Bon's dismissal of his servants, for of course there might be spies among them. Number three, his return here alone. Number four, the tickets to America and the letter from the carters, showing that he planned to flee and to take something of great bulk with him. Number five, his death, sharp, swift and inexplicable, the sort of death that Koshinga deals. All these can't be coincidences. Mad, indeed, he must have been, to think that Koshinga, who trusts no one, would trust him, would not put a double guard upon the treasure."

"I believe you're right, Hazard," I admitted after a moment's swift weighing of probabilities. "But how would he hope to get the money out of the country?"

"How do they get opium out of the country? There are ways of doing those things. But now—where is the money? How on earth was Ho Pu Bon killed? Why this impulse to a midnight plunge? And, most important of all, how long before whoever killed Ho Pu Bon will return with help and probably remove the jeopardized treasure? For of course, Ho Pu Bon's faithlessness means that he may have told others about it."

"Another question," I added bewilderedly; "where is Sha Feng?"

"There's an answer to all of them, probably one central fact that explains them all. But what?"

IV

THOUGH the night was warm, I found myself shivering a little. What assurance had we that the next instant we would not also fall victims to whatever ghastly tool of death Koshinga had used against Ho Pu Bon? I glanced around the room swiftly, almost furtively, at the innocent-looking teakwood furniture, at the unbroken surface of the swimming-pool with its dark, light-absorbing bottom which rendered the water almost opaque, at the diving-chute which dipped down into that water, and curved upward and backward to the doorway. My eyes fell on Tsai Mu'i, who was standing in a strained attitude just inside the room. I dropped the dressing-gown over Ho Pu Bon's body and beckoned her forward.

We questioned her anew, but got nothing more out of her. Sha Feng had sent for us; Sha Feng was here. Beyond that, she who had talked with us so fluently in the alley still took refuge in reiterating her inability to understand us. She was afraid, very much afraid—but now I noticed that she stood erect, forgetting her pretense of decrepitude.

Well, she was another mystery. I finished the disappointing whispered cross-examination myself, and then turned to see what Hazard was doing.

He was kneeling by the side of the pool. With his pocket-knife he was scraping the outer circumference of the basin which contained it. This circumference was flush with the floor, and was about two inches above the level of the water. He straightened up and whispered to me—

"Porcelain, enameled black!"

There was a queer eagerness on his face which I did not understand, nor did I understand his next action. He looked swiftly around the room until he discovered a stand on the polished top of which stood a bowl of goldfish. Quickly he strode across to the stand, lifted the bowl, carried it back to where I stood, and emptied it slowly, so that the fish slipped one by one off the matting, down the smooth porcelain surface and into the water. With the slightest exclamation of disappointment he restored the bowl to the stand, while the released fish scurried away into the dark depths of the pool.

"Not that," he murmured, coming back. "Well——"

"What did you expect?"

"No matter, since it didn't happen. Now what's to be done? I'm still afraid this thing's premature. I still think it would be better for Koshinga to be left in possession of his loot until that day is past which half Asia has been taught to look forward to—the dangerous half. But Sha Feng don't think so, nor the Government, and with the loot actually within our reach we've no right to let a chance to recover it slip. So, what's to be done?"

We discussed the matter for a minute or two in very guarded tones. One thing seemed clear; that we couldn't afford to leave the house. By the time either or both of us could return to the city, arouse the Government police to action and come back in force,

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it would be past daylight, and anything might happen.

Anything affecting the disposition of the treasure must take place before morning, for it could not be removed from the house by day. Consequently, if we could only keep the situation unaltered through the night we would have all the time we wanted afterward to investigate these mysteries and to search for the treasure.

And besides there was Sha Feng to think of. Queerly, Tsai Mu'i's fervently asserted conviction that he was still alive and still in the house woke echoes in both our minds. By his history, that erstwhile artful intriguer against the Manchus was hard to kill. And if he was actually responsible for our summons here, which we were now both inclined to believe, he would be expecting us to stay, and would be including us in any scheme he had in mind.

That was easily settled. The real problem, as we both realized, was at once to keep watch in this house until morning, and to keep alive. The real wonder was that we were still alive, intruders here where Koshinga kept his wealth. Tsa Mu'i, too—she would be in equal danger. But when, realizing this, we tried to get her to leave, we found her immovable.

It is seldom possible completely to understand a Chinese man, but in comparison with a Chinese woman he is transparent. Tsai Mu'i kept repeating that Sha Feng was here and that she would wait until he showed himself; and of the simple fact that lay behind her whole attitude and actions we could not get an inkling.

But when we had arranged our own dispositions for the watch we intended to keep, we persuaded her to withdraw to the corridor, where she would be between the two of us. This was our plan: One of us was to post himself in the room wherein Ho Pu Bon had died, while the other retired to the bedroom down the corridor in which we had found Ho Pu Bon's discarded clothing.

Thus both of us could hardly be dispatched at once; and if one was killed, the other might be able to spy upon his assassins, to discover the location of the money which we were both convinced was hidden here, and perhaps, if it was removed, to trail it to its new hiding-place. It is usually unwise to scatter one's strength, but still I believe that under the circumstances it was the most promising plan that we could have devised.

We matched coins for position. Hazard won the watch in the room of the bathing-pool. I waited until he had taken his position just inside the one door of the room and then retired to the bedchamber, darkening the corridor as I went by unscrewing the globes. Midway between us, as I have said, was Tsai Mu'i.

I drew a chair quietly to the door of the bedroom and sat down in it. Certainly I was never more alive in my life, nerves strung up, senses alert. I did not know what to expect, but I was sure that whatever the house held of drama was not ended. However, if I had strained my imagination to conceive an extravagant next scene, I should hardly have conceived one as strange as that which I was presently witnessing.

PERHAPS half an hour had passed, and nothing had happened. Then the absolute, eerie silence was broken by a subdued stir which might have been merely the lifting of a light wind through the trees, but which might also have been many other things. Under the circumstances it was infinitely suggestive, threatening. I leaned forward, listening intently; and then the sound passed.

But I was not sure that the cause of it had passed, and I got silently to my feet.

I was standing there with my revolver in hand, when I heard the sound of a voice.

It was a voice which I had heard once before, far down on the Pei-Ho; a voice which, heard anywhere, would have filled me with a mixture of hatred and fear; a voice which ran the gamut queerly from the guttural to the falsetto, blending all notes into an odd but forceful monotone.

It was the voice of the one man who, if the Ko Lao Hui war-fund were actually hidden in this house, would be most likely to come here—the voice of Li Fu Ching, Koshinga's cleverest agent, and head of the Peking branch of the Ko Lao Hui.

In the strange troop of events that had recently crowded my life, I think I had proven myself not easily unnerved; but of a sudden I found myself quivering. For if I were not mistaken that voice came from the room over which Hazard had mounted guard, and there was triumph in it.

I could not understand the words. I stole into the corridor, where Tsai Mu'i was standing motionless, seemingly tranced with fear. Beyond her I could see nothing but the open door, but now fragments of Li Fu Ching's sentences came to me.

"At last—in my way many times, and it would rejoice me to—a bullet. But there is reason for silence. The false Ho Pu Bon's death—yours also. You will walk—forward—still forward."

He was promising Hazard the death that Ho Pu Bon had died. But what was that death? And how had the ever watchful Hazard been taken off his guard? I crept past Tsai Mu'i, warning her to continue silence with a look.

Hazard had not answered Li Fu Ching

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Now I had gone to the floor, and was wriggling forward on my stomach serpent-like, hugging the wall. When I had got nearly to the door, I twisted over until my head was in the middle of the corridor. I saw Hazard first, and then Li Fu Ching.

Hazard had waded into the swimming-pool. He was knee-deep in that pool and was still moving stiffly and reluctantly forward. His hands were empty; the one revolver that he carried was lying near the edge of the pool, where he had been forced to drop it. Li Fu Ching was standing near the wall of the room, to my left, and his gun was trained on Hazard's head.

Li Fu Ching and perhaps twenty others—Ko Lao Hui all, by the brutish faces of them. Behind them was an opening in the wall, where an invisible panel had slid back. It was through this opening, of course, that Li Fu Ching had got his gun upon Hazard.

Three other of his men also menaced Hazard with their revolvers, and of the remainder there was not one who did not have a gun somewhere in evidence, while deadly curved knives were thrust in the trousers' belt of each, showing under their loose, unbuttoned blouses. They had come prepared to kill, and certainly Hazard seemed as helpless as any man ever was.

And yet, if I could read his face at all, things were not going altogether to Li Fu Ching's expectation or liking. It seemed to me that puzzled wrinkles had come about his narrow, reptilian eyes.

"The false Ho Pu Bon's death—yours also," he had said; but Ho Pu Bon had died on the brink of the pool, while Hazard was nearing the center of it. And suddenly Li Fu Ching called out sharply:

"You will go no farther! You will stop!"

Hazard did what I should have expected him to do, considering the evidence in Li Fu Ching's voice that something had gone wrong with the latter's plans, and considering that Li Fu Ching would hardly shoot unless he was forced to, for fear of the sound arousing the curiosity of some belated passer-by. Hazard kept on advancing into the pool as if he did not understand Li Fu Ching's command. And then. . . .

What followed seemed to me to belong to the realms of nightmare, of delirium, rather than to sane reality.

Hazard had neared the center of the pool; he was now shoulder-deep in the water. Suddenly he sank. Or rather he was sucked down, as if, which was actually what had happened, the bottom of the pool had given way both from under his feet and from under the water in which he was nearly submerged. The water itself dropped, bearing him with it. Instantly it closed in from the sides, over Hazard's head. Hazard had disappeared before Li Fu Ching could fire; and from the Chinaman came an enraged ejaculation.

"May a million devils torture him! May the forty-seventh hell be his abiding-place!"

The curses of Li Fu Ching's men answered his own, but they were somewhat subdued by amazement. Then, almost as suddenly as it had begun, the downpouring of the water ceased, the lowered surface became quiet, and the partially emptied pool began to fill again from an inlet in the side.

V

AT THAT moment my mind was like a confused kaleidoscope, in which emotions and ideas pursued each other without sequence or relevance, impossible to halt and impossible to grasp.

But as soon as I got a grip on myself, I realized that what I had just seen, extraordinary as it was in itself, really fitted in well with all that had gone before. Especially it fitted in with the conclusion to which Hazard and I had come concerning the presence in this house of the vast loot of Koshinga.

The treasure was here; and certainly it would have been most surprizing had our uncanny opponent chosen commonplace means to guard it. The treasure lay hidden under the guarding pool, into which Hazard had vanished, and by the side of which Ho Pu Bon, who had thought to make away with it, had died. Perhaps, I thought, Sha Feng's disappearance might also be laid to the account of the mysterious pool. But Li Fu Ching, choking down his rage, was talking again.

"It matters but little. He has escaped for the moment, but for that escape he shall perhaps die more painfully. Yet it is strange that the death in the water has passed, and it is still more strange that the door of escape opened under him."

"You forget that your servants are ignorant of these matters," muttered a tall rascal standing near him. "This is only plain to me; that the ocean-borne one is a devil who should be given the death of the slicing process."

"Because you abased yourself to become a house-coolie of the traitor Ho Pu Bon, and so discovered his purpose," replied Li Fu Ching, "you shall have the killing of him, if he be taken alive. And since that which these waters have guarded is to be removed, your minds will be enlightened concerning all that is now hidden from you, for it is well that you should know the power of Koshinga's weapons.

"But now I leave you. There is a way of emptying the pool of water other than that of stoppering the inlet pipe, which Ho Pu Bon intended—a way that I hid from him, else he would not have died this death. It was even

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foolish of me, under Koshinga, to trust him with the secret of the death that lay in the water. He who betrays Koshinga dies; but if it had not been for your good work Ho Pu Bon might have lived annoyingly long."

"Then the thing that my master did," questioned the other, "when his low-born servant led him here after telling him of the strange and suspicion-inspiring acts of Ho Pu Bon, was to put the death back into the water again, which the base Ho Pu Bon had contrived to take out of it? So that Ho Pu Bon, thinking that all remained as he had left it, came back to the house, and was stricken even as he set foot into the water?"

"You have intelligently stated the matter. Now you will wait here until I return."

And Li Fu Ching, forgetting not to bow gracefully to his companions, backed through the opening in the wall and was gone. Whereupon they who remained began to talk to each other in tones so low that I could make nothing of it, save that an occasional cackling, cruel-sounding laugh convinced me that they were discussing the trick their master had played upon Ho Pu Bon, and the way he had walked unsuspectingly to his death.

Well, so much was plain to me. Now I understood the reason for Ho Pu Bon's death, if not entirely the manner of it; now I understood the dread significance that had really lain in the saying Hazard had quoted to me, "The treasure of Koshinga will be found only under the waters of death." But it was for only an instant that I puzzled fruitlessly to discover the nature of that death. That was not so immediately pertinent as another and a very terrible problem that confronted me.

The number of men Li Fu Ching had brought with him made it evident that Hazard's surmise concerning the intention of the Ko Lao Hui immediately to remove the treasure to another hiding-place was correct. Here was my problem: Should I lie quiet, and then attempt to trail the bearers of that treasure? Or should I instead bend my energies to rescuing Hazard, who without help was plainly doomed?

Concerning the rescue, with the odds twenty to one against me, and with Hazard caught in a trap of which I knew nothing, I could see little hope of success. On the other hand I could easily hope to follow the Chinese, who were as yet unsuspicious of my presence. Also, I may as well state, I did not yet share Hazard's conviction that the recovery of the stolen loot was apt to prove a misfortune in disguise. And yet I hesitated; and it was probably as well for my future opinion of my own sense of values that my decision was postponed.

Logically, of course, there could be no hesitation. Logically one man's life should hang pitifully small in the balance against any phase of Koshinga's world-threatening plot. But that one man happened to be my friend. Friendship is not a logical thing, nor are its attributes. I wished fervently that I had only to weigh my own life against Hazard's.

I had not long to worry over the matter; and, curiously, the only thing that came out of my wrestling with myself was a sudden partial divination of Tsai Mu'i's part in this affair. Sha Feng, she had said, had summoned us. Sha Feng, she had asserted stoutly, and against the evidence of our search, was still here. Did Sha Feng's imperiled existence in this house of death affect her in the same manner that Hazard's peril affected me? Was that why she had risked her life to lead us here, why she continued to risk her life by staying? Of a sudden her wretched beggar's mask slipped off, and . . .

But what was that?

I had seen a slight agitation of the surface of the water in the middle of the pool—an almost imperceptible agitation. But it was moving slowly toward me. It was moving, indeed, straight toward the end of the diving-chute which dipped into the water, and it was such a disturbance as might be made by a man swimming very cautiously, close to the bottom. The Chinese, still chattering among themselves, had not noticed it.

My tightened muscles relaxed. A warm glow crept over me. My relief was unspeakable, for surely this was Hazard.

So desire forces conviction contrary to the facts, for it was not Hazard.

A minute later the tell-tale wrinkling of the water reached the end of the diving-chute. For just an instant the face of the swimmer was lifted above the edge of that chute, into which he had forced himself noiselessly. It was the yellow, placid, middle-aged face of Sha Feng.

I held my breath while he stole that glance, but the Chinese did not see him. He marked their position and also mine; and then ducked down again. The unsuspecting Chinese continued muttering together, intent on whatever they were discussing. And slowly, very slowly, as I pictured it, Sha Feng began working upward along the bottom of the chute, edging inch by inch, pressing with elbows and knees wide-spread against the low, curving sides. Slowly, of necessity very slowly, though he worked so carefully that I could not hear the slightest sound of his movements.

But I knew he was coming. Presently his immobile face, the color of fine old parchment, appeared above the upper end of the chute, which was just inside the door. His wide-lidded, bright eyes looked at me inquiringly. And indeed this was a precarious moment; he had only to descend the steps, when one

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stride would take him into the corridor, but during that descent he would be in full view of the Chinese. However, Li Fu Ching would soon be returning; then there would be a diversion. I made a sign to Sha Feng to wait.

Questions pressed themselves upon me. That Sha Feng and Hazard had met and talked I knew, for how otherwise would Sha Feng have known exactly where to look for the Ko Lao Hui? But how had Sha Feng escaped, why had Hazard remained behind, and why had Sha Feng remained imprisoned in that vault under the water until Hazard, by the sheerest chance, had been projected into it?

And, most important of all, how could Sha Feng's release be turned to account in rescuing Hazard and in winning the money away from the Ko Lao Hui? I grew befuddled in puzzling over these unanswerable questions.

"The water flows no longer into the pool, which will soon empty itself; for I have opened a second and greater drain in the bottom. Then shall come to you knowledge of the craft of Koshinga in guarding what is his and to the foreign devil knowledge of the fate of those who oppose him."

It was the voice of Li Fu Ching, come back from his errand. As I had expected, no sooner did the Ko Lao Hui receive this information, than they drifted in a body over to the edge of the pool, to watch the receding water. They stopped near Ho Pu Bon's dead body, their backs toward us; and I motioned swiftly to Sha Feng. He descended the ladder nimbly and absolutely without a sound, and stepped into the corridor.

Sha Feng was both a secret agent and an Oriental, which means that facial control was with him a matter of both inheritance and of training. Yet when he looked past me down the corridor, there came a light into his eyes that made me avert my own and resolve to stay where I was a moment longer. One mystery at least was almost solved; if I had needed further evidence I would have found it in the sound of a woman's swift, tumultuous breathing.

Yet was I still mistaken, who had given that phase of the affair somewhat of a romantic interpretation, for when a minute later Sha Feng, in the softest of whispers, introduced the pseudo-beggar woman to me, he said—

"Tsai Mu'i, my daughter!"

VI

I BOWED. I had at least been nearly right. Tsai Mu'i's figure was now so erect and lithe and youthful even under its rags, and her face, from which the heavy hair had been flung back, was so comely under its grime, that I wondered at the efficacy of her mimicry in the streets. She was a symbol of China's womanhood, which is changing as all things change, from the passive bravery that endures to the active courage that achieves. But just then was no time for considering that metamorphosis. I looked nervously through the open door of the bedroom into which we had retired and I wondered how soon an end would come to that pool of water which alone protected Hazard from the Ko Lao Hui.

"I am honored," I whispered. "But will your Excellency tell me——"

I had meant of course to ask him for an explanation of what was closest to my mind, Hazard's position and the chances of a rescue; but Sha Feng calmly took the words out of my mouth, assuming my interest to lie in that which most interested him.

"Gladly will I tell you, and indeed my daughter begs your exalted forgiveness for deceiving you. She had no message from me, but knew only that I had come to this house and that I had not returned; and she had heard from me of the very great wisdom of you and your honorable companion, and of the many things you have done for the Republic. Also I had told her of the way you had altered your features, so that you might walk unrecognized by the devils of the Ko Lao Hui. So, seeing you in the crowd——"

Rather impatiently I put in a question with a view to shortening his discourse.

"But why her beggar's disguise?"

"Because she knew our house was watched by the Ko Lao Hui—is it not so? And also it is not good that a lady of rank should be on the streets alone at night. She had started for the Government House when she saw you, and she knew that if I needed help yours would be quicker. And so——"

"Ah, yes," I cut him short, and indeed the girl's part in the affair was now quite clear to me. "But what of Hazard? They are going to kill Hazard."

"Once I also had a friend," said Sha Feng, passing over my question with Oriental facility. "He was killed by the Manchus and as a consequence I understand your fears. But your friend will not die this night, I promise you. That is, unless Koshinga——"

Moments were precious as I viewed matters; words were precious, too, and not without an element of danger, for though Li Fu Ching's men could not possibly hear our whispering from the side of the pool, there was no guaranteeing that all of them would remain there.

And I was just then intent upon one question, that of Hazard's safety. But the moment I heard the name of that arch-enemy of ours, my thoughts became confused, went whirling every way. I do not apologize for that. If Koshinga were personally involved in this affair, then indeed there was no forecasting the next moment.

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"Koshinga! Is he here?"

"I have heard him talk. The roof of the vault is the floor of the room; it is a thin metal plate through which sound carries easily. So I, hidden in that hiding-place of Koshinga's treasure, heard words from him to Li Fu Ching. They were evil words to hear. The treasure is found, and must be saved to the Republic; but now it has come to me that your friend was right when he told me that it would be better if it were not found at present. For it is my belief that Koshinga in his desperation and madness will now fulfil the prophecy that has been written——"

I was impatient with his circuitousness, and interrupted him sharply.

"Can you not tell me, simply, what has happened here tonight? Where you left Hazard and why you left him and what is ahead of us?"

"There will hardly be time. But I left your friend because he has not my skill to move quietly in the water. Besides, there were two reasons why one of us must stay, and your friend insisted that he be that one. He also insisted that you be told of his safety, so that you would not throw your life away in a needless attempt to rescue him. So I came—Listen!"

A loud gurgling of water came to our ears; obviously the pool was nearly drained. The end was nearer than I had expected; the drain which Li Fu Ching had opened must be very large.

"Very soon you will see that your friend is armed against his enemies as few men have ever been armed. He will escape, and together we will combat the doom that overhangs Asia as a result of this night's work. For Koshinga, thinking his treasure safe, gave utterance to Li Fu Ching of what he would have done if Ho Pu Bon's treachery had succeeded, and he had lost it.

"Now it is lost to him and passes back to the Republic; it can not be altered, for it is written. But of what is written for the future, no man can tell. Come."

Sha Feng, motioning his daughter to stay in the room, was stealing noiselessly toward the door.

And I with my mind beset by a thousand conjectures followed him. But even Sha Feng's hint of a great disaster to come, which disaster could be none other than the one Hazard had forecast on our way to this place, failed to dull the edge of my fear for Hazard.

It was then that a vague suspicion of Sha Feng began to beat in my brain. Of Sha Feng, wholly possessed, as his past life proved him to be, by love of the Republic he had helped to bring into being and by hatred of the Ko Lao Hui who threatened to destroy that Republic.

BUT a little later I was lying by Sha Feng's side at the end of the darkened corridor, and cudgeling my brain in vain to see any safe escape for Hazard. Already the Ko Lao Hui had descended the sloping bottom of the pool and were standing in the center of it; so that only their heads and shoulders were visible to us from their position on the floor. They were standing in a circle, evidently grouped around the door which led to that refuge of Hazard's, which had become a trap.

"Hai!" exclaimed one of them. "Was it here where the door is fitted that the water which continually entered the pool drained away? Will not the vault be filled and the foreign devil drowned?"

"Am I a fool, who arranged this thing; or Koshinga, who instructed me?" inquired Li Fu Ching. "Here is the pipe for letting off the water. Here is the larger drain, which I opened. Now will you make way, so that I may manage the door, which whirls and closes again, as it closed behind him who is to die, or stands open according to whether this button is pressed with force or lightly?"

Several of the group moved slightly. Followed the sound of smooth, metal surfaces, close-pressed, sliding against each other, and a slight creaking, as of the turning of pivots in metal sockets. Then——

"True," said Li Fu Ching, "this door could not be fitted so tightly but that there was leakage. But a way was made for the leakage to drain away, as you will see. The war-fund of Koshinga, which he is so soon to use to establish himself against the kingdoms of the earth, must always be in readiness to his hand. You will find the vault dry at bottom."

At that I thought the veriest shadow of a smile flitted across Sha Feng's face. And that smile, seeming to contradict Li Fu Ching's words, prepared me for the half-mirthful reply of one of the latter's men.

"My master makes a mistake so rarely that my eyes must lie when they tell me that there is water below."

"Your eyes tell you truly," said Li Fu Ching after a moment's pause. "But it is no matter."

Still by his voice the discovery disconcerted him a little. It was a trifle; but I have long known the occasional weight of trifles. And the waters in that house had proven themselves in all truth the very "waters of death." A vague hope, for which I could find no reasonable justification, struggled for a moment on the surface of my mind and then was swept down again and submerged.

For the Ko Lao Hui were beginning to disappear one by one, to drop down into the treasure-vault. Before each one vanished he placed a knife between his teeth, Chinese

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pirate fashion. Though their heads and shoulders only were visible to us, I knew that in the hand of each was a revolver. And if either Sha Feng or Hazard had had hope of salvation from some mysterious quality in the water, it seemed that the barely audible splash which followed each descent must give that hope the lie. They were wading in the water; it did not harm them.

But when I glanced at Sha Feng, I read nothing on his face but complacent satisfaction with the way things were going.

At that my suspicion of him revived again and flamed higher; for was it not altogether probable that he, fervid patriot that he was, had planned to sacrifice Hazard's life to the recovery of the treasure and the capture of Li Fu Ching and his men? Logically I could not blame him if he had, but for all that I went hot with rage as I lay there bulwarking that suspicion with other fancied evidence.

Hazard and he had been in the vault under the floor; he had come out, while Hazard had remained; why, save that Sha Feng had by some clever device tricked him into remaining? He had tricked him into remaining because he wanted to use Hazard as bait for Li Fu Ching and his men. Obviously Hazard was the bait, the vault was the trap, the door in the middle of the great porcelain basin was the door of the trap. When the last of the Ko Lao Hui had entered it Sha Feng would close that door, and upon Hazard would the rage of the imprisoned Ko Lao Hui vent itself.

There were many things that were by no means explained by this reasoning, but so much I felt was true, and I waited in an agony of suspense to see what it was that I should presently do.

Now no more than half of the Ko Lao Hui were left on the bottom of the pool. Every instant I expected to hear the beginning of the struggle which could end only in Hazard's death. It was a situation to shock from its balance the most unimpressionable mind, and my mind where Hazard was concerned was not unimpressionable. A pressing desire for activity, however hopeless, came over me, creeping into every nerve and muscle, into the very centers of my being, like an imperative physical hunger.

I think I unconsciously edged forward. Sha Feng reached over and touched my arm. He looked into my face—tense with that horrible waiting, for what? His lips moved soundlessly. I thought he sent me this message—

"Trust me!"

It was very well for him to ask that; and indeed I trusted him—as a patriot. In a sense his treachery was not treachery; it was but the sacrifice of one man for the larger good. But for all that I looked quickly away from him, unwilling that he should read what was in my eyes.

AND so I lay there, with my anger against Sha Feng rankling in my mind, with my distress at Hazard's fate intensified by the scarifying chains of impotence. For there was nothing I could do to help him now. All but six of the Ko Lao Hui had disappeared, and every instant I dreaded to hear the shot, the cry, the struggle, the fall—whatever sound it might be that would herald Hazard's death.

But that sound was long delayed. I wondered a little at that. It suited what I conceived to be Sha Feng's purpose well enough; but it was not like Hazard to hide away so long—for he must be in hiding—knowing that every moment increased the odds against him, lessened his chance of putting up even a damaging fight. But still, save for the stealthy movements of the Ko Lao Hui, the House of the Myriad Lights remained a house of tomb-like silence.

I fidgeted in spite of myself. Fidgeting, I crept forward again, my muscles unconsciously reacting to a certain intense desire. Before I knew it I was out of the corridor, inside the room. Sha Feng, I suppose, could think of no way to stop me without making a noise; perforce, he kept pace with me. The slight sound of his movements called my attention to my own; he was still at my side but I did not look at him.

He had had his way so far, and it now seemed that nothing could prevent him from having his way to the end; but I did not care for his further guidance. And I wanted to see——

I wanted to see the bottom of that great porcelain basin which had contained the swimming-pool, to see where Hazard had gone and where the Ko Lao Hui were going, to discover whence and how Sha Feng had emerged, without disturbance of the water. My long and helpless waiting in anticipation of calamity had taken severe toll of my nerves and that rush of curiosity was probably a reason-saving reaction

The remaining Ko Lao Hui had their backs to us and seemed to be intent on the opening through which one of them was about to descend. And so of a sudden I was on my hands and knees not ten feet away from the edge of the basin, over which I was now able to peer.

And then came what I had been expecting for a good many minutes—a revolver shot!

But before that shot came, before my instinctive and involuntary reaction to it, before the many simultaneous and swiftly silenced shrieks that answered that shot impinged upon my ears, before the tense quiet of the situation had broken into tumultuous action, I had seen that the dark-colored bottom of the basin was broken, not by two openings, but by three. One was obviously the immense drain, several feet in diameter, through which Li Fu

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Ching had emptied the pool so swiftly. Another, the purpose of which I could not guess, was about the size of a manhole and was still full to the brim of water. The third was in the exact center of the basin; it was circular in shape, about six feet across, and was bisected by an iron door which now stood in a vertical position, its rusty surface paralleling my front. It was of course through this third opening that the Ko Lao Hui, who were now all on my side of the door, were descending.

Four remained, of whom Li Fu Ching was one, not counting the man who was just swinging down through the hole. Then as I have said, the revolver shot, sounding from somewhere below. It could have but one meaning for me—that the Ko Lao Hui, searching for Hazard, had found him at last. And that, as I learned afterward, was the truth.

And the next instant I was on my feet and somewhat astonished to find myself there. I was on my feet with my revolver extended, and I pressed the trigger before I knew it.

Sha Feng was standing beside me, and saying quietly:

"The clumsy, impatient West. It is no matter, but——"

And cutting into the first of his words had come those chopped-off shrieks, which might have been belated and multiplied echoes of that cry which Hazard and I had heard when we entered the house—the cry which Ho Pu Bon had uttered when he died.

My aim had been for Li Fu Ching, but he had leaped aside at the moment of my shot. I think it was those shrieks, and not any sound from me, that impelled him. He leaped and ran with marvelous swiftness up the sloping bottom of the pool toward the door by which he had entered the room. I fired at him again but missed for I was also running, going forward toward the basin.

Li Fu Ching escaped through the door.

The three remaining Chinese, caught entirely off guard and unwarned by the cries of their companions, had lost their heads and were fighting each other to get through the opening in the bottom of the basin. One of them gave way and scurried around to the similar opening on the other side of the vertical door, and the remaining two plopped down through the hole together.

Even as they dropped they seemed to strain upward, as though they had suddenly discovered a danger below that was greater than the danger above them. Even as they released their clutches on the edge of the door they made spasmodic efforts to regain them. But they disappeared as Sha Feng and I raced down the slope of the basin; and even in my excitement I wondered amazedly that after that outburst of simultaneous shrieks not another sound had come from the mysterious vault which had swallowed them all and swallowed Hazard, too.

Not a single sound; but was there now, as these last men descended, a flash of bluish light that showed for just an instant against the red rust of the iron door? Was there a crackling, and two other cries that blended into one, and that in their turn were instantly silenced? I was not sure.

There are moments in which incidents crowd upon each other so swiftly that no man's brain can recall all of them. This was such a moment. Moreover, I was by now filled with a sense of fantasy such as I had never before felt even in those days of struggle with Koshinga, Master of the Extraordinary. Save for a certain purpose that had been born full-grown in my mind, nothing was clear to me.

I take no credit for that purpose, which was really sprung from impulse and might not have endured the test of quiet decision; but if I could I would descend to where Hazard was, share life with him as long as he lived and die with him if I must. Sha Feng would remain behind; he would cause that vertical door to swing to the horizontal again; he would shut us in with our enemies—and for that I could not blame him. Nevertheless I cursed him under my breath as he, guessing my intention, called out to me with what seemed, for one who had so far conducted himself so placidly, a strange rush of terror.

"Stop! Below there is death—death!"

Death! I knew it. But there might be a way out. "There is always a way out—always!" Hazard's own pet motto flashed through my mind. If Hazard was still alive, and if I could reach him——

By then, still running, I had reached the opening; and though I checked myself by gripping the upper edge of the door my momentum still carried me forward, so that I looked over that door and saw what was on the other side of it.

The last of the Ko Lao Hui, whom I had believed to have fled into the vault, was still there, crouching low, his yellow face twitching. Instinctively I clubbed my revolver to strike him. He had time to drop through the opening to join his companions but instead he merely tried to dodge my blow. He was only partially successful. The butt of my revolver struck him glancingly on the forehead, stunning him and knocking him backward, so that he cleared the hole. My upper arm struck on the edge of the door with almost the full force of my downward blow; and my revolver slipped from my partially numbed hand.

It fell down through the circular door. At the same instant Hazard's voice—and my heart leaped at the sound of it—rapped up at me peremptorily:

"Partridge! Stay out, for God's sake!"

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And again, a vivid flash of bluish light. A loud crack, like the snapping of a bent piece of planking, or like the sound produced by a bolt of electricity leaping across a narrow space. I was staring down into that opening from which came Hazard's voice and into which my revolver had fallen; but fortunately the very force of my impact upon it had flung me back a little from the door.

For at the instant of the flash I saw my revolver in the air midway between the lower edge of the iron door and a glimmer of water below. I saw that for the wink of an eyelid my revolver was the central point of that jagged flash, the conducting medium for the released death which tore its way upward from the water to the metal above.

And I remained where I was. I thought I understood in part. What was it Sha Feng had said? A double-edged weapon? A devil changed into a guardian angel?

"Are you all right, Hazard?"

"All right! I'm all right."

"Your servant asks a million apologies," came Sha Feng's exasperatingly deliberate voice from behind me. "The waters which I, even in my ignorance that you were coming, or of the coming of Li Fu Ching, had made to flood the bottom of the vault, are waters of——"

"They are waters surcharged with electricity," I snapped, somewhat angry with myself for having been so slow to guess what was really the key to the whole affair.

"That is as you say it in your language. So it was that Koshinga guarded his treasure, and your friend and I found a way to turn it against him."

There was indeed plenty that I didn't yet understand, but it was written that I should wait for that understanding. For at that moment there sounded behind me a deep-throated and wordless growl, of immense volume, hardly human; and I whirled to find Koshinga himself glaring at us out of eyes that gleamed like a leopard's.

VII

KOSHINGA, who was in body a giant; in features a deracialized monstrosity; in intellect a prodigy; in brutal egotism devil-like; in spiritual perception zero: Koshinga, who had been three centuries in the fashioning—as will be told later—and who fitted the purpose for which he had been made as a machine-gun fits the purpose of slaughter. Embodied strength, without scruples, pity or any weakness whatsoever; strength intended to crush down the opposition of ordinary men as a thresher flails a straw—such was the man who had discovered us in the very act of robbing his treasure-vault. Koshinga, with one companion.

If he had been alone, I should have trembled before him. As it was I know not what instinct of self-preservation made me shrink with an even greater dread from the ape-like travesty of a man who accompanied Koshinga, and whose right hand was flashing to his mouth.

Sha Feng had spoken of Koshinga's presence here. That remark had startled and frightened me enough at the time, but in the pressure of the last few minutes I had completely forgotten it. Now I knew that Koshinga, true to his policy of concealing his whereabouts whenever possible even from the bulk of his followers, had been in hiding somewhere in the house all this time.

Until he had heard that first pistol shot, he'd had no idea that things were not going altogether according to his plans, that Li Fu Ching was not proceeding uninterruptedly with his work of removing the treasure to a safer hiding-place. But one glance must have given him the approximate facts of the situation.

Also he must have felt sure that Sha Feng and I were not alone, that we had help stationed somewhere or messengers on the way for help—that, in brief, his ill-gotten wealth was lost beyond hope of recovery. For he bellowed with that madness in his voice that Hazard had prophesied:

"Fools! You have done what you will regret doing. Be it on your heads, the ruin that will engulf the world if I can not control the brew of power I go to mix."

And, for it lay not in the traditions of the Ko Lao Hui that Koshinga should without great need peril his own life by active conflict, he leaped backward through the door.

But I fumbled for the gun that I did not have, and my fear, as I have said, was not of Koshinga.

Undoubtedly it was human, that negro-ish thing that raised a blowpipe to its black lips—and now I realize that in the wording of that assertion I have betrayed my own doubts. Should it be he or it, thing or man, I do not know. In the biological laboratory in which Koshinga had been fashioned, other and viler creatures might have been fashioned also, and by similar processes. Spiritual and moral sense aside, Koshinga was a superman. This imp of his was no more than four feet high, and it was shaped like a spider-monkey, but it was clothed after a fashion in dark cloth and there was a certain venomous intelligence in its eyes.

A revolver cracked somewhere to my left. It was not Sha Feng that fired that shot, nor of course was it Hazard. A bullet smashed the forehead of the creature at which I was staring in horror. At the same moment something struck my left forearm, something that stung and burned for an instant. Then I ceased to feel it at all. I ceased to feel anything but a

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cool numbness that raced with my blood current toward my shoulder.

I saw Hazard coming out through the hole in the bottom of the basin with a face that was drawn and white. Sha Feng was staring at me.

"I've got it at last, Hazard," I cried; "the poisoned dart." I knew it was killing me, yet I could not get my right hand up, to pull it out. It came to me that it didn't matter, that Koshinga's poisons were infallible.

And of a sudden—those who know me will understand—I wanted to know before I died the exact reason for all that I had witnessed: how Sha Feng had got into the vault under the water, how he was imprisoned, how he had got out again, how Hazard and he had managed to turn the deadly current against the Ko Lao Hui, how——

"Why did you—" I began. "Why, why—" I stammered, swaying a little on my feet.

Then I was overcome with another wonder, for suddenly a strange form took shape in the air before my eyes. It varied greatly, now tiny, now enormous, now running swiftly toward me with feet on the floor, now dancing vaguely against the growing blackness; but it was always the face and the body of the man with the overbright eyes and the look of ever-present horror; the man whom I had suspected of madness, who had watched us start for this place, who had for days been following and watching Hazard and me. I was he who had shot the creature that had wounded me, for he had a revolver in his hand. But now he was aiming at me.

Some one seized me by the arm which the dart had entered. Again it was the newcomer. There came a loud report, and a terrible pain that drove numbness out of that arm and racked my body. Then I was carried somewhere. I was carried a long way.

IT CAME to me that I had left Peking, that I was in a cart which bumped along rough country roads day after day. Now the hood of that cart would be opened and Hazard's face would peer in at me, or Sha Feng's or the face of that man who had shot me and whom I now knew to be mad. When this happened I could see mountains, sometimes distant, sometimes near. Then there was the desert and the camel smell, and from a rocking which was not unlike that of a small boat in a gentle sea, I knew I was carried in a litter between the humps of a camel. At night there was rest under the stars.

I began to be troubled in mind; and it seemed strange to me that I was not troubled over this journey nor where we were going nor what was ahead of us. Somehow I understood that Hazard had learned more of that vast conspiracy between priests and Ko Lao Hui which Koshinga had hinted and that we were on our way to defeat it; and I felt quite sure that I would recover in time to play my part in that defeat.

But it was the puzzle that had been with me when I was stricken that bothered me; and when Hazard's face, queerly blurred, approached me, I overwhelmed him with questions, but I could not understand in the least what he replied. I knew this was useless, that it was a monomania, that it didn't matter in the least how the thing had happened and that I would be better employed in trying to discover the results; but my sick mind kept brooding over the matter and I couldn't stop it.

Until one morning, before the Gobi dust began blowing, I spoke, and knew that I spoke, quite lucidly to Hazard.

"I've figured it out for myself, quite as you would have figured it. Nod if I'm right; shake your head if I'm wrong. You said there was one central fact that explained everything—that was the electrification of the water. The porcelain bottom of the pool—porcelain is a non-conductor. The cable conducting the electricity passed through the iron bottom of the pool. The electricity came from the city power plant. That's why the house was so well-lighted, to explain its use.

"Well, Sha Feng came to the house first, some time during the day, suspecting that Koshinga's money was hidden there. Of course he found it vacant, as we found it. Then he investigated it, and found the pool. 'The treasure of Koshinga will be found only under the waters of death'—that saying probably came to his mind. Anyway he drained the pool. He could do that by wading into it and stopping the inlet pipe. When he came to the house, the water was harmless, for Ho Pu Bon had turned the current off before leaving. He wanted to have everything ready when he came back to the house to get the money out for the carters."

A sort of dizziness was coming upon me anew and though I could not hear my voice I knew it was growing fainter. "Am I right so far?" I questioned swiftly, and Hazard nodded with a look of wonder.

"Then Sha Feng found the button which controlled the door, and pressed it as you pressed it. So he learned its secret and got into the vault. He got into the vault, and discovered Koshinga's treasure; and then found he was a prisoner, for there's no way to open that door from within. Koshinga and Li Fu Ching would take care of that, would take care that any one who found the treasure would be imprisoned, even with the pool drained. So Sha Feng is fast in the vault. But here's a thing I missed. First he must have observed and examined that other opening in the bottom of the basin, the one like a manhole, that

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was still filled with water when I—went to sleep. He must have done that."

Again Hazard nodded, and I went on with a queer weak feeling of triumph.

"Then comes Li Fu Ching, and the spy that informed him of Ho Pu Bon's plan to steal the money, and Koshinga. Naturally they'd flood the pool that Sha Feng had emptied, switch on the electricity that Ho Pu Bon had switched off; and Li Fu Ching and his man left for help to carry away the treasure. Koshinga hid somewhere. Then Ho Pu Bon came back—and died of the death that had been put back into the water.

"Then we enter. But by that time Sha Feng must have discovered some way of controlling the current from inside the vault—another switch. He must have heard us talking and been uncertain whether we were friends or enemies, for we talked so low he couldn't hear our words. Being uncertain, he kept the electricity out of the water, but didn't call to us. Then I left the room and you stayed and Li Fu Ching came back again."

Hazard's lips moved, and I thought that he asked—

"How do you know these things?"

"Because it's the only way, the only way things could have happened. As you have told me," I smiled, " 'there's only one possible cause for an accurately determined effect.' Well, Li Fu Ching came back, and you were driven into the water; and you were lucky enough to find the button which controlled the door with your foot. So you joined Sha Feng and together you— No, Sha Feng must have already arranged the trap which did for the Ko Lao Hui. He must have arranged a way of electrifying the water which had accumulated in the bottom of the vault. The cable must have been insulated, he could drag it from its fastening, and— and so he came out and you remained. That's been explained. But how did he come out?

"I know," I answered my own question hastily. "There's only one way again. The way men escape from crippled submarines. That manhole was really an iron tube, with a partition in the middle and a removable cap on the end. I see the partition closed, the cap removed, the lower part of the tube drained of water, Sha Feng inside it.

"Now you replace the cap, open the partition and let in the water, and Sha Feng swims up into the pool. Reason for this arrangement, and for the arrangement whereby the water could be electrified from within the pool as well as from without? Koshinga's fondness for secret hiding-places, inexplicable ways of escape and hidden weapons. Is all this right, Hazard?"

Hazard was now only a dark blur before my eyes, but I thought that he inclined his head.

"I wanted to know. My ruling passion," I tried to smile, "curiosity. And now, now," and I knew the swift rushing in my veins and the pounding in my ears and the sense of lightness that possessed me for the coming of delirium, "now we go to drag down the devil from the high places, and to fight the forces of hell upon earth."

It was delirium, but it was not so far from the truth. Hazard tells me that after a minute I murmured again:

"There is a man with us who should be distrusted, although he is mad. And although he saved my life by shooting away the barb and the poison from my arm. A new way of cauterizing— But he should be distrusted because he is a ——!"

And then I slept again, for days upon days, while the caravan slowly made its way westward across the Gobi. Sometimes I knew that I was walking in my sleep. Indeed, I learned afterward that after the first week of that journey my body seemed to have entirely thrown off the effect of the poison and that there were many things that I did automatically. It was only my mind that remained dormant. I am told that there are certain known poisons that may be combined to produce that effect if a quantity is injected into the blood that is just short of sufficient to produce death.

After a long time I got the impression that there was trouble. Of trouble about food, which some one would not sell us; camels, the owners of which refused longer to serve us; and donkeys, which could not be hired. We were in a village which was called Kan Chow; a starved, perishing ghost of a village, with mud-brick huts all tumble-down and ruinous. The faces of the people were brown, gaunt and hopeless, but they sneered and gibed at us savagely.

"Clearly, the enemy's been here before us," said some one in a voice that sounded like Hazard's.

And it seemed to me that we left that town on foot with a hundred savage voices shouting after us:

"He who was Lao-tse the mighty,
Who was Gautama, maker of gods—
He comes again, even Koshinga.
The priests will tell of it, the white paper will talk.
The warriors will gather under his banner.
Ten thousand dragons will come to assist him.
Sha! Shaol (Kill! Burn!) Koshinga comes."

Then suddenly I came to my senses entirely and for keeps. It was the crash of revolver shots breaking into an absolute stillness that did the work. There were four of us lost in an immeasurable world of sand. To the right this sand was level as a floor to the horizon; but to the left it ran up in ascending even-surfaced ridges to a blackness of mountain-tops in the distance. And it was from over

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the top of one of those ridges which we had been about to climb that the shots came.

I went to my face in the sand. Hazard and Sha Feng did likewise. The Unknown, the man with the burning eyes, cried out as he fell; and then there was a thud, as if his head had struck upon a projecting rock. I reached for my revolver and found it and with a great rush of joy because I was myself again, jerked it down upon the seemingly empty sand-dune.

"There's one thing to do," I said, and the quietness of my own voice surprized me. "Advance by rushes; that's the ticket. Clearly we can't stay here."

"Partridge!" Hazard cried incredulously. And then, "Thank God, thank God!"

VIII

AHEAD of us there was a slight rustling. It might have been the wind stirring a bush, had there been a bush on all that lifeless landscape. A Chinaman's face poked cautiously over the top of the ridge. I fired and the face disappeared, but I knew from a spurt of sand that I had missed. Four yellow hands clutching revolvers appeared suddenly. Four more shots were fired, and one of the bullets dusted my face with sand.

My sudden return to reason had startled Sha Feng and Hazard into momentary forgetfulness of their danger. But now they turned their faces ahead again. I saw that Sha Feng's hand seemed well accustomed to the feel of his revolver, and instantly I began to squirm ahead. Whoever were our enemies, I felt that I could trust my companions to keep them down.

A revolver cracked behind me. I didn't look up, but my ears told me that one of our attackers had tried for a shot, had been himself struck, had struggled to his feet and fallen to the sand again, where he lay quiet. Now I stopped my advance, leveled my own gun at the ridge and waited for Hazard or Sha Feng to go past me.

It was Hazard who came, crawling swiftly. Then Sha Feng passed both of us and took up a position at the bottom of the ridge. A moment later the three of us, creeping abreast, had reached the crest of it. A dead Chinaman sprawled grotesquely on top of the crest.

A glittering lizard peered at us inquiringly from a rounded heap of sand, unafraid, its very instinct for danger destroyed, so long had it been since any other form of life had invaded this desolation. There was nothing else; the unique and profound desert stillness, through which I now vaguely remember traveling for a long time, had settled down again. And yet Death must lurk very near. We kept down.

"What is this? Where— Who are they?" I whispered.

"Hush. Ko Lao Hui, sent out to stop us." Hazard had twisted half-way around, and was looking back toward the place where we had left our fallen companion, he whom I, even in my own madness, had declared to be mad.

"By ——!" Hazard cried sharply, and fired.

Now of course, although this whole flurry of action had for me no easily assignable immediate cause, I had up to this point accepted it readily enough, and without wonder. I did not know where we were nor where we were going; but Hazard and I had for a year lived under sentence of death by Koshinga, and always and everywhere we were in danger of attack by his followers. But the next instant I was witnessing unmistakable proof that this was no ordinary attack, and if recklessness of life be courage, I was also witnessing as fine an example of that quality as I had ever seen.

THE three Chinese who were left alive had gone over the crest of the ridge a little way above us, and were running on bare and nearly noiseless feet toward the still motionless body of the man we had left behind us. They had chanced their lives on our not looking back that way—a slender chance enough. One man fell, shot fatally through the chest, but the other two kept on regardless. Plainly their continued existence had no value beside the motive that urged them.

I pulled the trigger, and Hazard's and Sha Feng's revolvers made a simultaneous report. We shot to kill; we had to, for they were very near our companion. Two were down and done for. The third and last man flung himself at full length beside the motionless white man and thrust a swift hand inside the white man's soiled jacket. For a moment the popping of our guns was like the sound of a rapid-firer, and then the Chinaman collapsed.

"Now if they had only known—" muttered Hazard grimly and then checked himself with a doubtful look at my face.

"What did they want?" I asked. "What is the meaning of all this?" Questions came in a rush to my lips, but Hazard was already hurrying down the rounded side of the sand ridge and Sha Feng and I followed him. Was I mistaken in thinking that Hazard, before he turned away, had shot a warning look at Sha Feng, accompanied by an almost imperceptible shake of the head?

What was this? Was there something that they had, in that swift exchange of glances, agreed not to tell me?

"Who is he?" I tried another question. "The white man, I mean?"

"His honorable name is Blalock," replied Sha Feng. "He leads us to where the devil that is called Koshinga prepares to——"

"Lend a hand here, Partridge," interrupted Hazard, who was by now bending over the man whom Sha Feng called Blalock. "It's only a slight wound in the shoulder—see. His

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unconsciousness is caused by this blow on his head. He'll soon be out of it. If you'll get his coat off and peel back his sleeve——"

Hazard had doffed his knapsack, and was getting out a roll of bandage. He carried a small water-bag, too, and Sha Feng and Blalock were similarly equipped. It was the first time I had noticed it. I busied myself as he directed, resisting the impulse to take advantage of my opportunity of discovering what it was that Blalock carried that the Chinamen had so desperately attempted to secure. It was inside his shirt, for I could feel it there; it rustled like parchment, and then:

"Believe me, old man," said Hazard gently, "it will be better if you don't— And now," he went on quickly, "let's see to this wound."

We dressed it, a simple enough task, and while we dressed it I questioned Hazard.

"I don't remember a thing—hardly," I said. "How long have I been out?"

"It's been nearly two months, Partridge, since we found Koshinga's loot. We left Peking that same morning, only waiting to notify the Government House of our find and to see to Tsai Mu'i's safety."

"Two months. And all that time—traveling?"

Hazard nodded.

"Where are we?"

"Pretty well over the edge. This is the Western Gobi, Central Kansu. These mountains to the south are the Nan Shan. We left the last town yesterday, Kan Chow. This used to be a trade route, the principal trade route into Turkestan and East Asia and Europe, but now you see the desert has conquered. Even Kan Chow is going."

"Ah!" I said rather vacantly. "I remember that town."

"You see," Hazard went on quickly, as if to divert my mind from these disclosures, "the desert keeps creeping down. This afternoon, when the wind comes up, you'll have a chance to observe the process. There used to be cities to the north; they're buried; and where we've been walking were foot-hills; they're buried, too. And—" he paused and regarded me steadily—"you've heard of the Sacred Pass?"

"Heard of it!" Instantly I was all eagerness. "Why, Hazard, you know——"

"We *hope*," he said, "that we're on our way to it."

"Then Koshinga is going to——"

"Wait a minute."

Having finished with Blalock, Hazard was about to examine the motionless Chinamen. But Sha Feng had already done that, and he announced the result impassively—

"All dead."

Whereupon Hazard turned to me again.

"I was right about Koshinga's next move, or at least he," and Hazard indicated the still unconscious Blalock, "assures me that I was. And perhaps you remember Koshinga's words when he found he was about to lose his war-fund. Koshinga's about to make his biggest play, and his most dangerous, to himself and to the Republic and to the world. He's about to produce the proof of the claim of his followers that he's the rightful head of the Buddhist and the Taoist hierarchies, as well as of the Ko Lao Hui. If he succeeds, the revolution is an achieved fact, already successful, whatever becomes of Koshinga. If he fails—but if he's left to himself, he won't fail. And Blalock here has a plan——"

"Blalock!" I looked distrustfully at his haggard, unconscious face, full of sagging lines of weakness. "Why Blalock's plan?"

"Why, he's our guide here, the only man who knows the way. But you'd better let him tell you when——"

"He should know the way," I cried sharply, pausing in my act of passing the end of the bandage under Blalock's armpit.

"Why?" There was a hurried, anxious note in Hazard's voice that convinced me that he knew what I had found even before I pointed it out to him—pointed out that tiny, indelible brand, composed of three Chinese characters intertwined, with which we had long known that each member of Koshinga's Inner Circle of Lesser Rulers was marked. A means of easy identification in case of broken faith, I suppose, and here it was, under Blalock's arm.

"Because Blalock's himself a Ko Lao Hui, of the highest rank next to Koshinga," I replied. "Bought by Koshinga, no doubt, as we've known other white men to be bought—a master of some branch of Western science selling his knowledge. Hazard," I appealed to the man who had companioned me so long and who in all that time had held no secrets from me, "didn't you know this?"

Hazard's face, worn bone-lean by hardships and very taut about the mouth and chin, expressed a momentary and very unaccustomed uncertainty. He looked up at Sha Feng and I followed his look. Sha Feng's expression was inscrutable.

"Why, yes, I did," said Hazard. "But," he went on swiftly, "these are Ko Lao Hui who attacked us, nevertheless, and the attack was principally on him. Partridge, I'm going to speak plainly to you."

"Why on earth," I demanded, "should you speak in any other way?"

"Well, then, before he," nodding at Blalock, "awakes. The first point is, that you've been out of your head a long time. That poison, whatever it was, affects the mind more than it does the body. And we don't know——"

"How soon I'll go out of my head again," I put it bluntly as Hazard hesitated.

"Well, yes," and Hazard tried to smile.

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"Not at all, I trust; but if you do, you'd talk. And there's something I don't want Blalock to know. Something that I'd have to tell you, if I were to explain why we're following him at all."

"Something connected with this?" and I touched the bosom of Blalock's shirt inside which there was the feel of a fold of paper.

"Well, yes," said Hazard disquietedly. "If you could forget that——"

"I can't promise to forget it," I interrupted him, "but at least I'm mum. I get your point of view. I don't blame you. I never felt saner in my life, nor more apt to stay so, but of course——"

"You had one lapse into sanity a while back," apologized Hazard, and I knew he referred to the time when I had unraveled the mystery of the House of the Myriad Lights. That had been super-sanity, super-clarity of mind, altogether different from my present feeling of normality, but I let it pass.

"All right," I said. "So much for the first point. What's the second?"

"The second is, whether you want to go on like this, blindfolded. I've brought you so far because I couldn't bear to leave you behind in your condition. Besides, there wasn't any place where I could leave you, where you'd be safe from the Ko Lao Hui. You remember Li Fu Ching escaped; that meant that our disguise was no longer useful.

"I intended to leave you in Kan Chow; but every man there had been warned to have nothing to do with us—that's why we're finishing the journey on foot. And then, too, I had an idea— Partridge, this is our last adventure against Koshinga. Either we defeat him here or it's the end for us and for every other white man in China. With the hundreds of millions of Taoist and Buddhist fanatics under his control—well, you know what it'll mean. And so I thought——"

"That I'd want to go through to the finish. Certainly you thought right. Now, a question that I don't think you'll mind answering. What day——"

But I was interrupted by a sudden movement on the part of Blalock, who, with the first glimmering of returning consciousness, clutched swiftly at his breast with his right hand. His hand closed over whatever it was that was inside his shirt, and then lay quiet.

"Tomorrow is the prophesied date of the meeting between Koshinga and the high priests," whispered Hazard swiftly. "We'll make it—at least Blalock says we will. Cultivate Blalock, Partridge, get him to talk and you'll know——"

At that instant Blalock's eyes opened. And within fifteen minutes we were on our way again.

IX

A STRANGE, wild way it was, which presently grew frightful with dust and sun-glare. The time of the attack upon us had been mid-morning, and every moment the heat of the desert increased until we seemed to be walking between two infernos. An inferno of sky, clear and hot like melted glass; of earth, which absorbed the heat and flung it back again; so that the air and all the landscape quivered before our eyes as if tortured by the tiny devils of radiation.

Blalock led the way, cutting diagonally into the Nan Shan foot-hills to the southwest, through a country that was as blasted, dead and desolate as any on earth. I followed him close, for I was minded to take Hazard's advice, and to have talk with him. It would be very difficult or it would be very easy; for my short observation, in my right senses, had convinced me anew of a fact I've already hinted. Hazard and Sha Feng, in their long caravan journey toward the unknown, had been guided by a man who was little more than half-sane.

And I didn't have to wait long for an opening. Presently I was startled by hearing Blalock talking to himself. It was only a low-toned muttering, but there was no other sound anywhere save the padding of our feet upon the sand, and it carried easily to me over his hunched shoulders. He was repeating the name of our enemy over and over again in a tone that indicated hatred.

"Koshinga, Koshinga, Koshinga."

I closed up on him, resolved to pretend that my own mental disability still endured, in part at least, and as far as memory was concerned.

"Koshinga! What do you know of him?"

And Blalock, glancing at me sideways, replied with a rather wild laugh:

"What do I know? I know—much."

That last was an anticlimax, probably dictated by caution. What he had intended to say was, "everything." And I resolved instantly to test the depths of his knowledge. There was little enough about Koshinga's history that hadn't a possible bearing on the event that lay ahead of us, the event that had been planned by the same brain that had planned Koshinga himself.

"I used to think I knew a little. Now I seem to have forgotten. And it seems to me that I should know, if I'm to understand——"

"You must know," interrupted Blalock sharply, "if you're to understand what we're going to do, if you're to help——"

He had spoken fervently and yet it seemed to me that a cunning note underlay that fervor—a note of falsity. I was glad to remember Hazard's hint that he wasn't wholly trusting Blalock.

"But who is he?" I pursued as Blalock's

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voice trailed off. "Who is this Koshinga? Of course I remember him; he appeared in the House of the Myriad Lights just before something put out my mind. But his origin—where did he come from? And why isn't he a miracle? I know that his coming was prophesied; I know that there are medallions and daggers and pieces of statuary centuries old containing representations of his face, line for line, and that there never was such another face on earth."

"A miracle!" Blalock laughed loudly. "A miracle! Bah!"

I led him on. It wasn't difficult; he appeared to me like a man obsessed with hatred of Koshinga. If I wasn't mistaken, in that obsession lay the reason for his madness. We were at one in our hatred at least, whatever duplicity on his part might lie between us. And so, on that blazing road which was leading us to what we knew not, I heard for what was, I think, the fourth time, the little known story of Koshinga's strange line of descent, of his actual creation to order by an indomitable human will.

"You must know," said Blalock rapidly, vindictively, "that this is not the first Koshinga, but the fifteenth. The first Koshinga was a pirate, master of the seas around Formosa a little over three hundred years ago—a Chinese pirate. It was that first Koshinga who established the Ko Lao Hui, whose first work was to be the overthrow of the Manchus and the restoration of the Chinese to power.

"But that was only the first work; next was to come the union of Asia and the conquest of the world. And all the schemes to that end, which this last Koshinga is attempting, were bred in that first Koshinga's brain like maggots. Including the prophecy of the coming of the last Koshinga, which prophecy, as you say, came true."

"But why isn't it a miracle, then?" I inquired.

Blalock again laughed scornfully and replied with that swift but half-hysterical fluency which comes to one who had brooded over a subject too long for the good of his reason.

"That's what it was intended to seem, of course. And it was a miracle of clever foresight, if you like—a miracle of long planning. Here's what happened. The laws of heredity and environment were put to work. It's a perfectly good theory that a rightful ruler of the world should be completely deracialized, or rather that he should have the blood of all races in him.

"Well, the Koshinga family tree was mapped out ahead to that effect. Koshinga brought a Dutch girl from Formosa to start the line. Other wives were to be kidnaped, carried off, each of a different race or mixture of races, which were designated in the law laid down by the first Koshinga. Of course, there were always foreigners coming to the China Coast. The first-born son of each Koshinga became the succeeding Koshinga. The other children were put out into the ranks of the Ko Lao Hui before they could know their parentage. There was heredity working. As for environment——"

I thoroughly believed what he said; and indeed any time during the past year I would cheerfully have taken any chance that might have enabled me to put the proof of his statements before the world. Still I interposed an objection here.

"But isn't the secrecy involved in all that rather improbable?"

"For China and the Chinese of the past three hundred years?" questioned Blalock with a fleer of nervous anger. "Why, even today I could tell you of a place—" He checked himself quickly. "But, as I was saying, the Koshingas naturally had absolute power. They were hidden away, seeing no one but the subordinate members of the Ko Lao Hui, to whom instant death was the punishment for disobedience.

"Here was progressive brutalization, the development of egotism, through fifteen generations. And everywhere in that secret home of the Koshingas, pictured on the walls, inlaid in the floors, carved into the furniture, was—this face. This hideous face!"

AND suddenly Blalock, with something between a curse and a snarl, jerked from the side pocket of his coat a medallion. It was a medallion of yellow gold, set with jewels that were worth a fortune; but the thing that drew a gasp from me was that the center of it was indeed engraved in the unmistakable likeness of Koshinga's face, line for line, feature for feature—the deracialized and well-nigh dehumanized face of our enemy.

"An ideal," went on Blalock, "which was worshiped and striven after by fourteen generations of Koshingas—the face of Koshinga who was to come, and who would rule the world. There was your secondary influence—your environment. That was the way the present Koshinga was produced, after the model conceived by the first Koshinga. It was no miracle, but the operation of natural law."

And Blalock put the medallion away again.

"True," I said; "but how to prove it?"

"Ah, but that is what I shall do. I, who am greater than Koshinga, because I shall destroy Koshinga. I shall rise in the meeting and denounce him to the priests——"

I began to see another reason, besides the latent duplicity that now and then showed in his manner, why Hazard and Sha Feng were not trusting their guide with any plan they might have in mind. This man was himself an egomaniac of the first water.

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"The priests?" I questioned. "What do you mean?"

Whereupon Blalock went on to explain what I understood already; that when the foundations of the Ko Lao Hui had been laid there had also been laid the foundations of the plot whereby the present Koshinga hoped to prove himself the rightful head of the Buddhist and Taoist hierarchies.

Through song and story and prophecy the masses of Asia had been prepared for this event; and the debased three-quarters of the priesthood would welcome it, would welcome anything that would tend to bolster up their failing power. And the high priests were coming, said Blalock, from every part of China and from Tibet and Mongolia besides, to the Sacred Pass, where Koshinga was to meet them and prove his claims.

"But what are his claims?" I asked.

"That he has supernatural power, of course. A message from Heaven, brought by a dragon—that's the prophecy. And also that he is the actual reincarnation of Lao-Tse and Gautama, founders of Taoism and Buddhism, whom the masses of China believe to have been one and the same man, as you may know."

I did know that a large part of the masses of China believed that.

"You spoke of the Sacred Pass," I said. "Where is that pass?"

"It's at the end of our journey," said Blalock. "It's the pass through which Lao-Tse left China some six hundred years B.C., on his way to India. And it's also the pass to which Lao-Tse returned after having founded Buddhism in India, according to the belief I've mentioned. In that pass Lao-Tse built himself a temple, and placed in that temple an image of himself, and also an image of the form in which he would appear in his next incarnation. Then he announced to his followers that he would reappear in that same spot, and left the world with an escort of winged dragons. That's the story. A few years ago the actual date of his coming was revealed to certain priests, and that date is tomorrow."

Again Blalock had but repeated what I already knew; and I had little doubt that all the superstitions he had mentioned had really been inculcated in the minds of the people by the Ko Lao Hui, by command of the first Koshinga. But here was a question that puzzled me. I had heard from all three of my companions—and indeed I believed it too—that until he had lost his treasured war-fund, Koshinga had been of a mind to get along without the assistance of Taoist and Buddhist priesthood.

How then could he hope to send out messengers to all the scattered temples in time to enable the priests to reach the Sacred Pass on the date set for the fulfilment of the prophecy? It had taken our party two months to make the trip from Peking; and many of the priests would have as great a distance to travel. I put the question to Blalock, who replied rather uncertainly:

"Koshinga is no god, but he is a very clever man, and he sends his messages swiftly. This I do know; the high priests will be there."

And I, having personal knowledge of many of Koshinga's past performances—the killing of the children of Kwang-Ho, for instance; the impossible escape from the locked cell and guarded tunnel in Peking; the diabolically clever attempt to capture the minds of the *literati* of China by means of a forged Shu King—I was inclined to believe him. The threat that Koshinga had uttered in the House of the Myriad Lights would be fulfilled.

All this time we were trudging on across the ever ascending foot-hills, covered deep with the drifted sand. From time to time Blalock drew out a pocket compass and corrected his course. I drew from him the acknowledgment that an easier way to the Sacred Pass lay along the edge of the desert proper, skirting these foot-hills; but that was the way the bulk of the priests would use. To be seen by them would be fatal to Blalock's purpose—but what an utterly mad and hopeless purpose it was!

He intended to expose Koshinga before the assembled priests. The lease on life I gave him after beginning was about ten seconds; Koshinga would strike him dead. And even if the impossible happened and he were able to complete his exposure, I doubted if it would have any effect upon the priests. As Hazard had said away back in Peking, the great danger of the situation lay in the fact that most of the priests would come to the meeting-place eager to be convinced.

No doubt they were very superstitious, these decadent misrepresentatives of two noble creeds; no doubt they were to a great extent dupes of their own charlatanry, and would readily believe the dragon messenger Koshinga would provide for them. But what really moved them was self-interest; what they really hoped for was a master charlatan, one who would restore their failing grip on awakening Asia.

No, Blalock's unsupported words would be useless. Somehow I felt that he knew this. I felt that he concealed his real plan from me. That was easy enough to bear, for Blalock was a stranger; but it was harder to know that Hazard and Sha Feng were also hiding something from me. And yet I couldn't blame them. Though I clung hard to my sanity and had no doubt I should continue to cling to it, every now and then a recurrence of the effect of the poison would come upon me, a dizziness, a whirling in the head. These symptoms were probably aggravated by the heat and fatigue and the torment of the flying sand.

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SO WE went on through the day. Fire was impossible, for here was not even a dry twig; twice we ate of the uncooked maize and dried meat, hard as a rock, with which Hazard's and Sha Feng's knapsacks were filled. Dust was in our clothing, coated our skins, grated in our teeth. But after a long afternoon the wind fell again, the menacing rattle of the sand ceased, the glaring shafts of light melted into twilight.

And I had learned from Blalock only what Hazard had doubtless intended me to learn—that though he was half-mad, wholly unreliable, and himself a member of the Ko Lao Hui, he was certainly leading us, with whatever motive, to the culmination of the last and greatest of the Ko Lao Hui plots.

That is, I had learned why Sha Feng and Hazard had accepted his guidance from Peking. But why had Blalock offered that guidance? Known enemies of the Ko Lao Hui as we were, it seemed that our company must only embarrass Blalock. What part had we in his plans? And why had he been following us and watching us in Peking?

I remembered that he had beyond doubt saved my life by his revolver shot, with the muzzle held against my arm, shooting the barb from my flesh and instantly cauterizing the wound. My reason told me that none but a friend would have done that but my instinct warned me that he was not a friend.

Shortly before dark Blalock's pace slackened a little. We had shifted our positions many times during the day but I was again walking by Blalock's side with Sha Feng and Hazard a little behind us. And I saw that Blalock's gaunt face was drawn tighter than ever with apprehension, while a queerly contradictory look of relief had come into his overbright eyes.

"We haven't much farther to go," he muttered. "That is, if I'm right, and I'm quite sure I am," and he looked with an air of intelligence around a land that was as barren as a dead planet. "The rest of the way will be better done by night."

At that I asked him bluntly—

"Have you ever seen this place you're taking us to?"

"Not I," he replied with a queer laugh. "No white man ever saw it. No man of any race whose bones still hold together ever saw it, up to a week ago."

"You make a mystery of it," I said impatiently. "After all, if you've told the truth, what can it be but a pass in the mountains with a ruined temple in it—the temple of Lao-Tze?"

"It can be a long-turned leaf out of the book of the past," replied Blalock. "You will see."

And presently he called a halt in a place well adapted for concealment—a hollow between three giant hummocks that rose out of the floor of sand.

We ate there and rested, and it was well into the night when we started again—a white night with a full moon that hung in the sky like a great, gleaming plate. Now for hours we descended a long sloping incline, dotted with an infinite number of sandy knobs between which Blalock picked his way. The world ahead of us seemed empty, soundless and unknown.

Once—it may have been the poison working in my system again—I thought that the very night spaces around us were full of a menacing whispering, the whispering of a vague conspiracy. And it seemed entirely certain that the stars glittering in the heavens were closer to us than in any white man's world.

And yet once during that night we came upon the ruins of man-made things, the collapse of what must have been the stone watch-towers of a city, shaken down with terrible age. It was only the curving tops of these that were visible; the other buildings were buried deep and every block of stone was rounded smoothly by the blown sand. That was near the end of our journey, near what was left of the Sacred Pass, which had indeed been the chief connecting link between two worlds before the advancing Gobi had turned all this land into a dried-up finality.

But it was hours yet before we actually reached that place. Blalock wasn't altogether sure of his way. He retraced his course several times and beat to north and south, breathing hard and muttering to himself. Ghostlike, we four prowled over that white desolation, where no man ever came.

It was absurd, impossible, fantastic. It could of course have no real ending. Either we would wander here forever, like condemned souls, or we would presently wake to normality. So I thought and then, to the stirring of a deep-seated fear, I would remember Koshinga, whose devil-inspired plotting so often leaped the bounds of the ordinary.

I would think of his ten million fanatic followers, of the hundreds of millions of idol-worshipers whom he had planned to add to his following, of the consequences that would result if the philosophy of Lao-Tse and the mercy of Gautama were superseded by Koshinga's brutality—and I would pick the shadowy places a little more carefully and move more silently.

And then toward morning we came to a place where the sand gave way before us in a steep descent and as Blalock looked over the edge of it he uttered a thin, eager cry, like the whine of a hound that has closed upon its quarry. Hazard and Sha Feng and I closed up on him and followed his look.

"By the great toe of the prophet," muttered

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Hazard, "it's as he said. This is a leaf out of the past indeed."

"Fulfilment, fulfilment!" whispered Sha Feng with something like awe in his voice. "The brain to conceive, the will to do, the patience to wait—great as he was evil, was the first Koshinga."

Patience indeed, the patience of the true Oriental who is commonly willing to wait for his results until his own flesh has passed into dust. For there before us was a trough between two mountains, running north and south; and in the middle of that trough was a building, a temple, vaguely visible in the moonlight, which had plainly just been rescued from the accumulated sand of the centuries. All around, the sand was higher than the top of that building, having been shoveled and carried back with incredible labor until it lay in a great circular ridge. It was on top of that ridge that we were lying.

But Blalock allowed us to stop there only a minute. Then he led us around the ridge to the right, a long way. It was evident that he knew there were watchers around that building; and also evident that he thought he knew where they were posted, and how to evade them. Which of course was no wonder, since the Inner Circle of which he was a member had doubtless arranged the details of the disinterment long before. Finally, feet foremost, and very cautiously, he began working his way down the ridge of sand. We followed him, imitating his movements; but not before we had looked to the north and had seen the stars hanging low to the level horizon.

"There's a clear sweep to the Gobi," I murmured to Hazard somewhat unnecessarily. "Certainly the builder knew the temple would be buried."

"Certainly. That was why——"

But Blalock looked around and signaled impatiently for silence.

We got to the bottom of the ridge safely, and then began squirming on our stomachs across the bottom of the sand-pit toward the temple. Half-way there I looked back and saw a gap in the circular ridge to the north—a gap that led to the Gobi, and that had been left there for a purpose. It seemed to me that there was a great, vague stirring outside that gap, and that the light wind brought me the smell of many camels.

There, I thought, the leaders of two decadent religions, themselves master fakirs and workers of false miracles, waited admission to the greater miracle that had been staged for them by Koshinga. But not by Koshinga alone; nor was this planned perversion of religions more than a part of the clockwork mechanism of the Ko Lao Hui conspiracy. And when I thought of the age and strength of that world-menacing conspiracy, it was as if a ghostly hand came out of the past and touched my will. And I felt insignificant and helpless—as insignificant as a mote in the ether, that drifts into the path of a world.

BUT at last we reached the temple and the entrance to the temple, in front of which were stone steps and a portico and four pillars supported by tortoises wrought of iron. The temple itself was low and sprawling, heavily timbered, and with a steep, curved roof well adapted to bear the weight of sand. Everything was gray, the color of the sand that had embraced it so long; and we were gray, too, from head to foot. Well-nigh invisible, and creeping forward inch by inch, we ascended the steps and passed through an open door.

Darkness, silence, and of course danger. We got to our feet. Blalock's footsteps were noiseless on the earth floor. I followed him by the light touch of my fingers on his coat. Hazard followed me, and Sha Feng after him; for it was a narrow aisle flanked by wooden benches up which Blalock was leading us, with what in his mind I would have given much to know.

We'd not gone far before I became aware of a dim glow of light ahead of us. It seemed to stream upward from an opening in the floor; and it faintly outlined two human-like images, life-sized, that stood in front of it. Their bases were a little higher than the floor, and presently we were standing abreast before the raised earth platform upon which they stood.

I should have liked to have examined those images. I felt that I could make a safe guess concerning the appearance of one of them, and perhaps both. I remembered who had built this temple, according to that tradition which could hardly be other than Ko Lao Hui propaganda. Lao-Tse had built it; Lao-Tse who was also Gautama. He had built it; and in it he had placed as a sign an image of himself as he would appear in his next incarnation.

But the light indicated life, and the light must first be investigated. Whatever his secret purpose, Blalock's immediate inclination still paralleled ours; and it was Blalock who first climbed upon the knee-high platform and stole around the two images to the left. As I passed them I felt of the nearer image; it had been chiseled out of rock.

Now we saw that the light did stream through a square opening in the floor, the trap-door of which had been flung back. Blalock got down on the floor, lowered his head through that opening and gazed around upon whatever was below like an investigative serpent. In the complete silence, Blalock's whisper, when he got to his feet and reported to us, seemed startlingly loud.

"A cellar. It seems empty."

"And still," whispered Hazard, "it may be worth while to investigate."

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It was good to see Hazard take the initiative again. He, who ordinarily followed no man, had followed Blalock overlong. A wooden staircase, perfectly preserved by the action of the dry sand, led down from the opening. Hazard, with his eyes intent and his brow crinkling a little, started down that stairway. We all followed. I came last and I held my revolver in my hand.

And at first sight there indeed seemed to be nothing here, nothing but an empty cellar, with half a dozen Chinese candles bracketed about on its heavy teakwood walls. A cellar which apparently extended clear across the end of the temple, but the front wall of which was separated from the rear wall by no more than a dozen feet. I thought that front wall must be almost directly below the image.

Hazard's swift eyes darted speculatively around the cellar. Then unexpectedly he raised his right hand and pointed to the front wall.

"There should be a door there," he whispered. "Another cellar."

Blalock started, with an astonished look toward Hazard.

"Let's take a look. See, Partridge— Ah, here it is."

"How did you know?" asked Blalock bewilderedly.

It was the question I was also asking, though with less surprize, for I was well used to the swiftness and occasional mystery of Hazard's mental processes. There was the door, or rather a rectangular crack that indicated a door, in the exact center of the front wall. There was no visible lock, knob or hinge; but they might be on the other side. Hazard tried to push it open and failed.

Then without an instant's hesitation he turned sharply upon Blalock and flung at him like an accusation two biting questions.

"Now, what else do you know of this devil's plot? And what's the real reason that you've brought us here?"

X

BLALOCK'S face had already been indicative of anxiety and fear and twitching nerves. At Hazard's direct attack, which must have been as unexpected to him as it was to me, he lowered his eyes swiftly and furtively. But the next instant this strange man looked up again squarely at Hazard, and said savagely, forcibly, and with apparent sincerity—

"I brought you here that you might help me balk Koshinga, expose him, destroy his influence with the priests."

"You didn't say anything of that in Peking. You were to expose him yourself, without our help. How are we to help you? But why waste words? You are yourself a follower of Koshinga, one of the Lesser Rulers of the Ko Lao Hui."

Sha Feng was watching the two with contemplative eyes that said nothing. Chinese immobility is justly famed, but I didn't believe that he could have concealed his surprize at Hazard's abrupt denunciation of Blalock, if it had been equal to mine. As for Blalock, his thin hands clenched convulsively and a tremor ran over his body but he continued to meet Hazard's eyes steadily.

"Even if that's true—" he began.

"And you know who we are," Hazard continued relentlessly. "You know Koshinga honors us by regarding us as his most dangerous enemies. Knowing that, you've brought us here, into his power and yours. You, already a traitor to your race, a renegade, the lowest type of man—you've led us into a trap."

Now, there were reasons which needn't be gone into deeply why I found it hard to accept that explanation of Blalock's conduct. The affair was too complicated; the bait had been laid too far from the trap; and unless Blalock was an artist at deception, his own manner had heretofore cleared him of that suspicion. I believed that his hatred of Koshinga was real; but now, to my astonishment, his face became almost a confession of guilt. A look of shame came over it; he faltered, hesitated, seemed on the point of confessing, and then——

Then that happened for which I shall always believe Hazard was hopefully waiting. Chance might have favored him, as he modestly directs me to say that it did. But I shall always believe that, with his knowledge of what was behind that door, he had taken his position directly in front of it and commenced conversation in hopes of just such an interruption as occured.

The door opened inward. For an instant, against a stronger light than that of the room in which we stood, a lofty-browed, brutal-jawed Chinaman in a blue mandarin gown stood revealed.

What that Chinaman had made of our low voices, or what he expected to see when he opened the door, I do not know; but I know that at the sight of us his face became convulsed with astonishment and terror. And he started to slam the door shut again.

But Hazard turned and leaped forward with lightning quickness and caught the Chinaman by the throat.

When Hazard caught him the Chinaman was already retreating as swiftly as he could. The momentum of Hazard's leap hastened that movement and for an instant they struggled silently inside the door. The Chinaman was a large man, appeared powerful, and there was no telling but that he had companions. I sprang to assist Hazard but the Chinaman

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reached the door with his foot and it was slammed shut in my face.

I threw myself against it but it held fast. Behind it, the sound of the struggle continued; some one was thrown violently against the wall. Then, strained breathing, the sound of torn cloth, a swift rush of feet, an imprecation in Chinese.

Something impinged against the other side of the wall—seemed to sink into that wall and cling there. Immediately preceding that sound, a muffled pistol shot.

"Hazard!" I called as loudly as I dared, with my lips close to the door. "Hazard!"

"O. K., Partridge," and it seemed to me there was more of exultation in Hazard's voice than I'd ever heard in it before. "I had to shoot—he had a knife. In a minute!"

But it was several minutes before he came out again.

I waited without another word, for enough and more than enough noise had already been made, and I had a not unreasonable feeling that disaster was upon us. Besides, I was so altogether bewildered that intelligent speech seemed impossible. Here was Blalock, who had practically confessed by his manner his treacherous scheme to betray us to Koshinga; here was Sha Feng, cleverest of all Chinese secret agents, who seemed not even annoyed at that revelation; and there was Hazard, my companion, who had apparently walked with open eyes into a trap from which there seemed to be no hope of escape.

True, we might seize and overpower Blalock before he had a chance to complete his betrayal, but— And at that point I was still further puzzled to observe that Blalock had his ear pressed to the wall behind which was Hazard, and that by his face he was anxious as I was to see Hazard come out again.

No, there was more in the situation than I could even imagine. For instance, I still couldn't rid myself of the conviction that Blalock's hatred of Koshinga was real. But why, then, was he serving Koshinga with such unneccesary zeal? Blalock's repeated statement of his intention to expose the falsity of Koshinga's claims to the priests still rang true, in spite of the evidence against him. And if Blalock were serving the Ko Lao Hui, why had the Ko Lao Hui attacked him, why had the village of Kan Chow been warned against dealing with us, why—why—why?

My brain was growing muddled with these unanswerable questions; and it was a relief when the door in the partition between the two cellars opened again and Hazard came through it.

He came out swiftly and silently, and closed the door carefully behind him.

I had just time to notice that there was a gleam of triumph in his eyes that matched the exultation I had heard in his voice, when——

On the floor above our heads there sounded the pat, pat, patting footsteps of many running, slippered men. Of men in the chamber which we had just left, making for the head of the stairway which we had just descended. Of men who ran otherwise in an ominous silence, Ko Lao Hui beyond doubt, an overwhelming number of them.

Blalock's trap was sprung. And once in the hands of the Ko Lao Hui and of the master of the Ko Lao Hui, we needn't hope even for the mercy of a swift death. We had fought against Koshinga too long; we had balked him too often—and besides there was information he would want of us.

Death by *lingchi*, the slicing process; that would be our end, unless Koshinga had driven his mind still deeper into the pits of infernal imaginings than the ancient Chinese, and contrived worse torture. But that would not be if we died fighting; and there was one that I suddenly lusted to take with us.

The traitor, the renegade, he who had brought us to this pass—Blalock, who had actually turned and started toward the stairway, to meet his confederates. I raised my gun against him with a hot tingling of rage. I called to him, for with my finger on the trigger I found that I couldn't shoot even him in the back.

"Blalock, —— you!"

And then occurred a thing that was paralyzing in its unexpectedness; for Hazard, felinely quick, reached me with one stride and thrust my hand down with an iron grip.

"No!" he hissed. "No! Let me handle this. Do nothing."

"What in the name of Heaven!"

SUDDENLY Hazard released me, ran swiftly to Blalock, seized him by the arm and whirled him around and thrust into Blalock's unsteady hand his own revolver.

"Take this. It will help you. Do what you intended to do. Surrender us."

Then Hazard turned and in the same insistent whisper surcharged with will-power ordered Sha Feng, who had also raised his gun, to put it down again. Sha Feng hesitated and obeyed with a mildly puzzled look on his face.

And Blalock also seemed puzzled. He took the weapon that was forced upon him; but his face expressed absolute disbelief of the situation. Hazard had to order him to raise the weapon and cover us with it.

Hazard then sprang back to my side, and forced my revolver down again—I had involuntarily raised it—so it would seem that Blalock had caught Sha Feng and me in the act of drawing. It was as if Hazard were arranging a tableau.

It wasn't the first time in my experience with

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him that Hazard had astonished me. I myself claim to be no stupider than most men; I can usually see the immediate cause of an effect, the wheel within a wheel in human affairs. But that's logic; and Hazard added imagination, the capacity to judge the third and the fourth and the *n*th wheel, the underlying reason for things.

So I'd seen him snatch victory from defeat, seen him dive into the abyss of despair and bring up hope. But this was different. Now he had flung away hope, played into the hands of our betrayer, surrendered himself and Sha Feng and me. It was incredible!

Down the stairs came a rush of Chinese, red-sashed Ko Lao Hui with fighting faces, part of the inner guard which Koshinga had long been assembling for the rallying-point of his army. It didn't astonish me any to find one that I knew, devil-faced Shen Yun of Sian-fu. It was he who had condemned the children of Kwang-Ho to die because that town had rebelled against Koshinga's extortion. Hazard and I had defeated him in that design, and hotly indeed he hated us, with a hatred that was exceeded only by that of his master, Koshinga.

When I saw him, my revolver hand jerked up again; but Hazard, standing a little behind me, whispered imperatively in my ear:

"Let be. I've a reason. Let be."

And because I still trusted Hazard, against all evidence, I again obeyed him.

A moment later the crowd of Ko Lao Hui surged over Blalock and well-nigh swept us off our feet, a flood of angrily jabbering men. Knives flashed and revolvers were raised against us; but Shen Yun's coldly gloating voice held them in check.

"Koshinga has told me his will concerning these two white men, who are to die no ordinary deaths. Perhaps the secondary devil (foreign devil's friend) who is with them also has knowledge which will be useful to him who rules. All three will wait the judgment of Koshinga. There is a safe prison in the front of the chamber above."

Well, that was as I had expected. We were seized and searched roughly and thoroughly, stripped of everything but our clothing, and hustled up the stairs. It was while we were ascending those stairs that I heard part of a swift passage of words between Shen Yun and Blalock that was fresh food for my bewilderment.

"And you also," Shen Yun had turned angrily upon Blalock. "Koshinga will also be glad to see your face."

"He will be more glad of the gifts I brought him," returned Blalock in perfect Chinese. "The two whom Koshinga has so often failed to trap [and the other who is no less important."

"That is true; but all three are of less importance than the thing you stole. You know the reward for those that betray Koshinga's trust."

"I know it well," and, looking back, I saw that Blalock's tense, overwrought features were distorted in a rather ghastly smile. "But it is you who have yet to learn the depth of Koshinga's cunning. Tell me, how better to win the confidence of these men than by seeming to betray Koshinga? And why should I come here, where Koshinga will be in an hour's time, if I have betrayed him?"

Truly there seemed no answer to that question; and to me no answer was needed. It wasn't Koshinga whom Blalock had betrayed—but what did Shen Yun accuse Blalock of stealing? Was it the thing that Blalock carried in the bosom of his shirt, which felt like a roll of parchment or paper, and which Blalock seemed so desperately afraid of losing? Which indeed Hazard had admitted to be at the bottom of his reason for following Blalock?

"It is true that you have done Koshinga a service," admitted Shen Yun doubtfully, "and it may be that your disgrace was planned to that end. You are free then until Koshinga comes; but you will not leave this place."

The pale gleam of the last dawn that I ever expected to see was creeping into the great hall of the temple. Hazard and I were dragged from the head of the stairs past the two great stone images. I managed a glimpse at them over my shoulder, and the face of the larger of the two was the face that had glared at us in the House of the Myriad Lights; the face upon the medallion Blalock had shown me; the misshapen and remorseless face of Koshinga.

To the right of that image, kowtowing to Koshinga in the ritual attitude of devotion, was the Chinese conception of Lao-Tse, founder of the Taoist religion, who, in the belief of many, was also the first of the living Buddhas. With bowed head Lao-Tse, preacher of uprightness and mercy, was offering Koshinga a sword!

Ancient, ancient, very ancient looked both of these images; it hardly needed the evidence of the excavated temple to prove them to be centuries old. A proper stage-setting indeed for the long prophesied marvel which was now to come to pass—the appearance of the "dragon with words in his mouth," Heaven's messenger to Asia.

Again I thought of the man, long dead, who had planned all this, building this temple, fashioning the images, sowing the wordy seed of prophecy, weaving a web of horror that bade fair to extend over all time and throughout all the world, and I'm afraid my own spirit bowed down in fear, if not in reverence, to that archtype of inflexible purpose, the first Koshinga, who had also fashioned beforehand the last of his line, the man-devil whose coming we waited.

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XI

BUT for all that deep-seated fear, the surface of my mind seethed with a rushing, passionate curiosity. The meaning of life is to learn; and I shall never die with a question in my heart if there be time for my lips to phrase it. No sooner had the door of our prison-room closed behind Hazard and Sha Feng and me then I turned upon Hazard swiftly.

"But why, Hazard? Why in the name of sanity——"

"S-sh!" warned Hazard. "It's not safe. We'll be heard."

That was very probably true, for the room into which we had been flung opened directly off the audience room of the temple; and a watch was quite sure to be placed on the door although it was heavily barred besides. But by that time a certain smoldering anger at being kept in ignorance concerning so many things had turned into recklessness.

"What does it matter? We're done for anyway. When Koshinga comes——"

"When Koshinga comes, he'll be busy with the priests, who you remember are to arrive this morning. As for being done for, why I personally never felt more alive. Nor," he whispered, "in all our war against Koshinga did I ever feel more hopeful."

And it was at that remark that my anger against Hazard passed into a certain pity for him.

His hobby of the infallibility of the human will, his will in particular, had served him well in the past but now he had spurred it too hard and it had raced away with his reason. Hazard's mind, high-strung and sensitive, the mind of a genius, had broken down at last. Hope? There could be no hope, any more than there could be a sane explanation of why Hazard had played squarely into Blalock's hands in the cellar. Into the hands of Blalock, who— I could not spare Hazard one reproach.

"You might have let me shoot him, Hazard. He deserved it, the traitor!"

"Hush!" warned Hazard again with an alarmed glance toward the door. And then in a whisper: "Yes, Blalock had planned to betray us. But don't be too hard on him. It was for the sake of a cause for which he knew we'd both be willing to die; and indeed he must have known that he would very likely die along with us."

It hurt me to hear Hazard talking so nonsensically. I looked away from him around the room, and immediately saw something that lightened my spirits a little. There were no windows in the walls, but directly above the door was a small, transom-like opening, doubtless placed there for ventilation. Here was at least a chance to divert my mind from our troubles; here was a chance to witness the chicanery that would put Koshinga's foot upon the throat of the Republic.

"We can at least see this thing," I suggested rather bitterly. "If we had our guns—but of course, we haven't. One thing I think I promise though; the impressiveness of this affair will be broken by at least one white man's yell. I wonder they didn't think of that."

"I wonder too," said Hazard; "but they probably didn't have any other place to put us. But, Partridge, I'm going to ask you this—not a sound, not a sound. In the name of all we've gone through together! I wish I'd explained before, and I'd like to explain now; but there's too much depending on it, and I daren't even whisper it. Ask Sha Feng if I'm not right—and promise me."

Then he smiled more cheerfully than I'd seen him smile for months.

"There'll be enough excitement about this affair before it's finished, without starting anything."

And I made him the promise. His manner was convincing and he might have something in mind. And I, of course, could hope for no more from my threatened interruption than, possibly, a little speedier death.

There was a small bench in the room and we placed it before the door just under the opening. Then we sat down upon it to wait for the arrival of the priests. And it was characteristic of the accuracy of detail with which Koshinga contrived his plots, and of his power to command implicit obedience of all who dealt with him, that we hadn't long to wait, and that the whole assemblage arrived almost as a unit.

But in this case, of course, Koshinga had been assisted by another fact. The priests had known the prophesied date of the meeting. Doubtless they had made their plans and calculations long beforehand. The message of Koshinga, however and with whatever marvelous swiftness delivered, had only set in motion the plan carefully contrived three centuries ago by the first Koshinga. Or, according to the belief of the people who were to be duped, twenty-six centuries ago by Lao-Tse.

Anyway, not an hour passed before a steady stream of men began to enter the audience room of the temple. We could hear their slippered footsteps, and a growing hum of conversation pitched in a tone of awe and wonder.

If that was the effect already produced upon them by the sight of those long-buried images, I wondered how they would feel when they saw the living Koshinga, the exact reproduction in flesh of one of those effigies, the exact fulfilment of the prophecy which had brought them here. A marvelous tale indeed they would carry back to their people—marvelous, even without the crowning wonder of the dragon which was to bring a message from the gods.

I restrained my curiosity as long as I could;

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but at last I mounted the bench. Hazard and Sha Feng followed my example; and together we looked out upon what was, I suppose, one of the strangest gatherings that ever assembled in this most interesting world.

BY NOW the audience chamber was nearly filled. Their backs were toward us, but we could pick out the shaven-pated Taoists, the Po-Bon monks with hair to their waists, the lamas from Tibet, gorgeous in their cassocks of yellow silk, scarlet *khatas*, and great, purple mantles.

Up the aisle another group of these lamas were marching, holding in their hands their cardinal's hats, lacquered on top with gold and scarlet underneath. In contrast there were the black-gowned high priests of China proper and warrior churchmen from Mongolia with swords by their sides.

My imagination was already straining itself to conceive of the immense authority possessed by these men when I heard the usually imperturbable Hazard draw his breath sharply, and followed his eyes to see what had startled him.

And it was only then that I became actually and entirely aware of the importance of what I was witnessing and its probable brutal consequences—for the Dalai Lama had entered the hall!

Beyond doubt the most powerful single individual in Asia, the permanent incarnation on earth of Pradjapani the secondary Buddha, head of the Saskya secret order, king of Debadjung, revered by all Tibetans and Mongols and by all Buddhistic Chinese, this soldier, intriguer and archpriest had come to meet the man who claimed to be greater than he—had come to meet Koshinga.

I knew him from a sketch drawn by one of the very few white men who have ever talked with him. Besides, he was accompanied by a bodyguard of about twenty soldiers, carrying rifles, and uniquely uniformed in red with orange facings—the Debadjung uniform.

He himself looked every inch a soldier; his face was European in cast and orange in color; and his medium-sized, very erect and sinewy figure was clad all in the royal Tibetan yellow, tunic and trousers and boots. A sword with a jeweled hilt swung in a scabbard by his side.

His lips were tightly compressed; his eyes, neither oblique nor slanting, looked straight in front of him, and a slight frown was on his face. He led the way down the aisle and he and his bodyguard took seats that had evidently been reserved for them, in the front of the chamber, just before the two images.

"Ah!" I heard Hazard murmur to Sha Feng. "This should make it easier."

I didn't know what he meant. Unquestionably it made it more dangerous; but also, with the entrance of that man whose hidden hand has been behind so much of Asiatic history, I felt a vague and ill-defined hope. And I thought I understood a little more clearly why Koshinga had hesitated to assemble these forces which even he might not be able to control. But the stronger these forces were the more dreadful would be the result of even a temporary domination by that devil-man.

There were no more arrivals after the Dalai Lama. I looked for signs of the Ko Lao Hui or Blalock; but none was visible. It was like Koshinga to keep them out of sight; claiming the support of the gods, he could not afford to lean heavily upon human assistance. And the tense and expectant silence which followed the seating of the Dalai Lama lasted until Koshinga appeared.

He didn't appear immediately; he knew how to make men wait for him. He knew how men's nerves grow ragged, their senses susceptible and their minds befuddled from waiting under stress. For about fifteen minutes nothing more happened of that event the importance of which made the stake of my own nearly forfeited life appear so insignificant, when——

Koshinga stood upon the platform. He hadn't come upon it; he had assumed form there; and in the dim light the manner of his appearance seemed to be a swift emergence from the side of the larger stone image. For a moment he stood beside that image, motionless and silent. By that pause he challenged comparison, challenged any one to detect a line of difference between the long-buried stone face and his own.

There was no difference. Both were monstrous in the true sense of the word; there was not even a suggestion of the race to which either might belong; if humanity is human then they were both dehumanized; strength beyond the strength of normal men and untinctured by a grain of sympathy—that was what one read in both those faces. Even the dull-gray gown that Koshinga wore resembled the robe of the image.

Then Koshinga spoke; but before he spoke I noticed that every man in the assemblage swayed back a little in his seat. It was as if a great, weakening wind of intense and evil power had come from that platform and swept back through the chamber.

Indeed, I knew from three previous personal experiences with Koshinga that there was no one present but became in that moment a little less his own master, a little fainter of will and resolution, and although I could not see a face I knew that every eye was fixed on Koshinga in something like an open and helpless stare of fascination.

Only the Dalai Lama, if my eyes were to be trusted at that distance, braced himself in his

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seat and stiffened his shoulders and seemed to regard Koshinga uncompromisingly.

"There was a prophecy," began Koshinga slowly in a voice of immense volume. "I am the fulfilment of that prophecy. There was Lao-Tse who was also Buddha. I am he. I am he who was always, who made the cycles, who gave the old law and who will give the new.

"I was and I return again. I am he who rules and who must be obeyed. Heaven has sent me to master the earth; and death will be the award of Heaven to those who oppose me, but the kingdoms of earth will be divided between those who follow me."

And such was the suggestion of abominable power that he managed to convey in his voice and manner that even to me his claim of omnipotence seemed at that moment in no way absurd. Impossible, of course—so my reason assured me; but emotionally I had to fight hard to keep from falling under his sway.

I wondered how many of the priests were engaged in the same debate with themselves. They sat under his speech as if entranced, as if they themselves were more than half-deluded —they who had come here seeking but a new means of continuing the delusion of their people.

Koshinga's speech wasn't a long one, and I've already given the substance of it. Several times he reiterated his promises and threats; and then he touched lightly upon the promised Holy War that would bring in its train the mastery of the East over world affairs. Under him the combined Taoist and Buddhist hierarchies would be the seat of that world power. Absolute despot as he had been in the past and hoped to be in the future, he must have found it hard to make that promise—another reason why he had hesitated to carry out this last item of the program of the first Koshinga.

"But this is needless talk," Koshinga went on. "From the beginning it was written that I should come and that I should rule; and the gods who have sent me give me wisdom and power. The dragon that lies under the earth, and whose breath is death to common men, comes forth to talk to me.

"He tells me the true *feng shui*, the secrets of wind and water and earth and the mastery of all the elements. And it has been promised, and you know of the promise, that he should come to me today, bringing me the will of Heaven and declaring it to you. Wherefore let the dragon himself speak, declaring my authority."

It's been the saving habit of a lifetime, during which I've seen as many strange things as reason would permit me to see, to discredit all explanations that are not based on natural law. Because man's knowledge is still incomplete, that habit of mine has sometimes left me bereft of any explanation at all; but I was now duly grateful for it. In truth, that which I now saw was enough to shake one's reason at the source.

KOSHINGA had stopped speaking, and was regarding with unshaken calm the monstrous fulfilment of his promise rising, as I live, from out of the earth directly to Koshinga's right front. It was the head of a dragon, that creature which is a myth, but whose scaly coils have for forty centuries been entwined with Chinese history and Chinese thought, and whose pictured image surrounds every Chinaman from cradle to grave.

It rose from earth so hard-packed that it broke away in great triangular wedges; and it crawled with a spasmodic motion as of a thing worked by wires, sprawling toward Koshinga with great taloned claws thrust alternately forward and back and digging into the ground—grotesque head uplifted, yellow scales gleaming.

Of course, it was only a trick, only a part of the wild and immense sorcery by which Koshinga hoped to rule the ignorant. Of course, it wasn't necessary for Koshinga's purpose that they who beheld it should regard it as anything else. It was only necessary that they should be able to tell their people that they had seen this thing, and that Koshinga's claim to power had received the endorsement of the embodied dragon.

Credulity would do the rest, the credulity which has so many times in China ripened into a harvest of death. Indeed, there have been few changes of power or dynasty in China that have not been accompanied by some such signs and portents, and this was merely the greatest sign of all. A trick, a trick, I repeated to myself, and still——

And still it is a rule that there are none so susceptible of delusion as they who live by deluding others; and I felt sure that in that trick Koshinga had surpassed himself, had overleaped necessity, had builded perhaps better than he knew.

For with the appearance of that dragon something like a curtain of horror perceptibly dropped over the temple, and I myself was afflicted with dismay and terror, trembling in the very depths of my being. The personality and speech of Koshinga had been enough; the appearance of the dragon overrode reason; and by my own feelings I knew that whatever message the dragon might bring would be accepted for the time being at least, and by the majority of the priests, as truth straight from on high.

It was then that I stole a swift glance at Hazard, hoping to receive from that man whose courage I'd never seen shaken, something that would help me tauten the failing resistance of my spirit. And I did, for he smiled at me. If it hadn't been impossible, I should have said that it was the smile of satisfaction and pleased

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expectancy, as if he had known what was to happen, and what would happen next, and was well pleased with it all.

But how could he have known? The veriest shadow of an idea flashed across my mind. The cellar in which Hazard had busied himself for a few minutes just before our capture by the Ko Lao Hui—wasn't that cellar directly below the spot where the dragon had appeared? But an unholy fascination drew my eyes back to that dragon, which still advanced toward Koshinga. The sound of its movements, of the gripping of its claws upon the earth and the dragging of its belly, was now the only sound in the place.

Into that near silence Koshinga's voice broke with an added effect of horror.

"Behold the messenger of the gods, bearing in his mouth truth and death. Who shall refuse to hear his words, and who, hearing, shall fail to believe and obey? He has come as has been foretold, and the message that he bears you shall carry through the Empire, for it has been written——"

For the first time Koshinga seemed to see what I had already seen, that the dragon carried between its gleaming fangs a fold of yellow parchment.

"—by the high gods," Koshinga concluded with a rigid hand pointing toward the paper. "Who shall receive the message of the dragon?"

Of course, no one stirred. Clearly the message was intended for Koshinga. If one believed in the seeming miracle, he would not interfere with its delivery; if one disbelieved, he would remember the death that the dragon's breath was supposed to bring to common men—a threat that Koshinga might easily make good.

Indeed, at Koshinga's invitation my mind steadied itself a moment upon one rather ghastly thought, that Koshinga would not be apt to let so easily contrived evidence of the dragon's powers go by default. The dragon would be fatally armed, and somehow a victim for the dragon would be provided.

But Koshinga would receive the message, that message which he himself had undoubtedly written. He would receive it, he would pass it to some one else to read, that all might know it was read aright. And then—he had received it.

While never a finger in all the assemblage moved, Koshinga stooped and took from the mouth of the dragon the sacred parchment. The dragon kept on without changing its course, as if it would pass behind the two images. The Dalai Lama still stared at the scene with his head held rigidly erect; and to him Koshinga stepped in three swift strides, thrusting the parchment into his hand.

"Pradjapani, who shall be under Heaven and me ruler of all the world, read thou the words of Heaven, that all may hear."

XII

IT WAS a bold stroke for the support of the one man present whose allegiance was altogether necessary to Koshinga. As the Dalai Lama went, all that assemblage might be expected to go, and all Asiatic zealots. Throughout all the East from time immemorial the successive incarnations of Pradjapani have been the pivots around which moved the vast wheel of religious power.

Men do not surrender such ascendency lightly; nor would that pretended god-man, the Dalai Lama. But he could not have remained unimpressed by what he had seen, and his presence here proved that he had at least considered hitching the wagon of his ambitions to Koshinga's rising power.

Rising, the Dalai Lama took the parchment, unfolded it and studied it for a moment. I thought, Oriental as he was, that his shoulders twitched, and that he bent his head and scrutinized it more intently, as if he were astonished at what he read. The rest of the gathering waited in fascinated silence.

I looked sidewise at Hazard, upon whose forehead beads of sweat were starting out. Sha Feng's yellow face was still placid, though he must have known as well as we that the immediate future of the whole world might easily depend upon the events of the next few minutes.

The Dalai Lama spoke in a clear, fine voice, not loud, but one that carried well—the voice of a man who would be hard to check.

"You are assured," he asked Koshinga, who had retreated to his former position, "that these are indeed Heaven's words to men?"

"Who can doubt?" questioned Koshinga with a glance at the snarling scaly horror at his feet.

"And you, Koshinga, bind yourself, as do I who am Pradjapani, to respect and reverence this as Heaven's message, whatever it may be?"

"May the earth engulf him who does not," replied Koshinga.

"Then will I read," and the Dalai Lama turned sidewise, half-facing the audience, but with Koshinga still within view. "Hear me, you who have assembled here to receive instruction.

" 'This is the truth,' " he read from the parchment, " 'that must be told to all who have ears, and who fear the gods. It concerns an evil doing that the gods have suffered long, and will now destroy. That light may be let in upon darkness, the words are here given of him whom men know as the first Koshinga, who, basely and in disobedience to Heaven——' "

The instant reaction from hopelessness to something surer than hope was too much for my self-control, and I couldn't quite choke back the cry of joy that rose from my heart. But

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it didn't matter, for at those last astonishing words a sound combined of the swiftly drawn breaths of all present filled the audience chamber; nor was Hazard's whispered, "Thank God, thank God!" in danger of being overheard. Scarcely daring to trust my sanity, I stared at the Dalai Lama, until a hoarse cry from Koshinga drew my eyes back to him.

"Stop!" Koshinga, his greenish eyes flaming with rage and his face working convulsively, started toward the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama gave a sharp command, and the rifles of his bodyguard snapped up in readiness to aim.

"The messenger of the gods must be respected the message of the gods must be read."

And Koshinga, who must have known that his dream cosmos was tumbling about his head and that all his plans were wrecked, was thus held helpless to interfere, while the Dalai Lama read on:

"'I, who am Koshinga, ruler of the seas before the coming of the cursed Manchus, do ordain upon my followers and upon their children and children's children, and upon all who may hereafter join them for the working out of my purpose, that they do this, my will, until that purpose be achieved. Which purpose is the conquest of the earth; and to that end——'"

Now there was a low stir in the chamber—amazement expressing itself in muscular contractions. It was not amazement at the substance of what was being read. There was probably not one priest there who hadn't already heard something of the truth concerning the origin of Koshinga and the Ko Lao Hui, though they would have rejected and forgotten it had the dragon proclaimed him a god.

They knew that Koshinga's power with the people depended mainly upon suppression of the truth; but because of that its delivery from the mouth of Koshinga's own oracle was to them an actual miracle. They muttered their wonder to each other, and under cover of their muttering I whispered to Hazard:

"You knew this was going to happen. In Heaven's name, how? Did you put——"

"Never mind. I knew this was going to happen—*but what will happen next?* Koshinga will never——"

Hazard stopped abruptly, staring with suddenly increased intentness at the group formed by Koshinga and the slowly crawling dragon and the two images, as if he saw there the beginning of the answer to his question.

The Dalai Lama's voice, sunk now to a distinct and compelling monotone, droned on; and so far the story he was reading was exactly the same as the story Blalock had told me yesterday. It was the story with which Blalock had either foolishly or falsely declared he would confound Koshinga; but now it was being told with authority, as out of the mouth of the gods; also, for the conviction of more practical minds, it was being read from a document which I felt quite sure was the actual work of the first Koshinga. But how had that document got here? As I followed Hazard's glance a certain memory came to me, the memory of a carefully guarded packet—and with it a vague doubt concerning my judgment of Blalock.

That instant my doubt was changed into certainty; for Blalock had come up the stairs behind the images and was running toward the front of the platform. His face was more than ever the face of a madman; for it was distorted with fear and with something more powerful than fear—with hatred for Koshinga, upon whom he glared. But his knowledge of Koshinga, dangerous always as a monstrous adder, held him away from Koshinga's reach. He stopped well back of Koshinga and began to declaim wildly—

"Will ye be dupes of this man, who is but flesh and blood, born as other men, but only mighty in his cruelties——"

Of a sudden the surface of my body grew cold, and a momentary dizziness, born of a great dread, shook my mind. Was this to be a needless sacrifice? Clearly Blalock did not know that the falsity of Koshinga's claims had been already and forever made clear to all present; clearly he did not know that a Chinese Ko Lao Hui had followed him up the stairs and was at that instant leaping upon him from behind with knife uplifted.

He would kill Blalock or Koshinga would kill him—Koshinga, or the dragon whose "breath was death," whose metallically gleaming head was now within four feet of Blalock's body, and whose movements were without doubt controlled by Koshinga's will.

Koshinga had glanced back at Blalock; and that last dread may have been inspired in me by the change that flashed over his features as he faced the front again—a grimace of baleful triumph, as if he had discovered a vent for the fury of defeat which possessed him. His right hand darted behind the image of himself as though impelled by a terrible intention; he pressed something swiftly and the dragon hissed with the whistling note of compressed air suddenly released.

BUT that same instant Blalock had become aware of the death that was rushing upon him from behind. He leaped aside; and so it was that his Chinese pursuer checked his rush on the spot where Blalock had been standing, the spot where Koshinga still believed he was standing.

And the Chinaman saw what was to happen and shrieked aloud, even before whatever death it was with which the dragon was armed came upon him. Then he stiffened with hands flung up, and fell still shrieking, and crawled

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with momentarily lessening strength away from the dragon. Koshinga looked around again and saw what he had done.

It is nature's safeguard for humanity that egotism ever tends toward madness; and it is probable that at that last stroke of adverse fate Koshinga went mad. But had he remained sane, his next step would probably have been the same. Hazard had hinted it in his last half-uttered sentence, "Koshinga will never—" What he had meant to say was that Koshinga would never willingly permit any one in that whole assemblage to escape alive.

The Dalai Lama's reply to the growing confusion in the hall had been to raise his hand and his voice, holding his audience in their seats and driving into their minds the message of the dragon, the message which would damn Koshinga and the Ko Lao Hui eternally were it spread throughout China.

And the priests would spread it; they had been commanded to spread it; their own self-interest would impel them to do so; were they not to be partners in Koshinga's pretenses of absolute and divinely ordained power, they must be his enemies. All this must have flashed through Koshinga's mind, but mostly I think he was filled with a mad rage and a desire to destroy.

He turned toward the stairway leading down into that cellar in which Sha Feng, Hazard and I had been captured, and in which his men were still concealed; and he cried out in that voice of abominable power, hot now with hate:

"Come up, come up, Ko Lao Hui. It is time for the killing. The day is come. The messages will be——"

"Blalock!" shouted Hazard. "For your life and ours and more. Come! Come here!"

Blalock heard Hazard's cry, which was pitched at the top of his voice. Koshinga may or may not have heard it, for he was already darting through a door at the rear of the platform. The false dragon had collapsed as Koshinga leaped away from it, with a harsh grinding of metal plates.

The Dalai Lama stopped reading, thrust the parchment into the breast of his tunic, and said something in a low tone to his soldiers. Blalock sprang from the platform, landing well out in the midst of the priests, who had come to their feet in confusion, and he struggled and shoved through the mass of them.

"There'll be —— here," muttered Hazard, "but it's Koshinga—it's Koshinga that's dangerous."

"The messages?" I gasped. "The messages he spoke of?"

"The call for the revolution. Ah-h."

The soldiers of the Dalai Lama had slipped from their seats and spread along the edge of the platform, where they flung themselves prone, rifles to shoulder and eyes glinting along the barrel.

"They'll handle that crowd," rasped Hazard, "the crowd in the cellar; but is it likely that's all? Is it likely that Koshinga— Ah, Blalock —the door."

Blalock, a wild figure with the clothing half-torn from his thin body, had got through the crush of priests and was now immediately below the small opening through which we had seen these things. He didn't look up at us; his eyes were intent on something in front of him—the sentry whom we had almost forgotten, but who still guarded that door. Suddenly Blalock darted in; craning my head forward, I saw a knife glance past his shoulder; but the next instant he had flung the wielder of that knife straight over his head, among the priests.

And now the four of us—we three white men and Sha Feng—were struggling away from the door which Blalock had unbarred, through the mob of cassocked priests who were also surging toward the exit of the temple. Fear inspired all of us, priests and laymen; but ours was the grimmer and more ghastly fear, as ours was the greater knowledge of our opponent, and of the ferocity of his unleashed power.

And our fear was not for ourselves alone, but for the patient millions of Asia over whom the wreck and ruin of civil war might presently break; nor could any one continent contain the full results of the mischief which we foresaw might be loosed this hour.

We burst out into the glare of the desert day just as rifles began to rattle behind us—the Dalai Lama's body-guard engaging the Ko Lao Hui. We needed no consultation; but one thought was in the mind of each—to seek another entrance than the guarded one through which Koshinga had passed, to the room into which he had gone.

But just outside the temple we stopped for an instant, appalled. The front of the mob of priests that had followed us also stopped, recoiled, and pressed those behind back with shrill, warning cries. For as if the shots inside the temple had been a signal a crackling rifle fire now echoed from without and the air around the temple had become full of flying bullets.

That had happened, in short, which might have been expected to happen. The eastern segment of the circular sand ridge, not two hundred yards away, had become crowned with red-sashed Ko Lao Hui, advancing upon the temple.

On the inner slope of the western segment a smaller number of troops in orange and scarlet debouched from files to skirmish line at double time, answering the Ko Lao Hui fire as they ran. This was the obvious explanation: the Dalai Lama and Koshinga had both been distrustful of this meeting, had each thought to safeguard himself against the other; and as a consequence the temple and the lives of those therein had become the prize of battle.

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XIII

BUT our hesitation was only for an instant. The next moment we were darting around the corner of the temple, running low.

"Never mind this," Hazard had shouted; "it's Koshinga who's all-important. Koshinga!"

He flung the name like a curse into the hot air, whining with bullets.

"But what do you think?" I cried as we rounded the corner of the temple and saw before us a box-like annex, not ten feet high at the eaves, into which Koshinga had evidently retreated.

"You heard him: 'The messages will be sent.' 'The day is come.' Can you doubt what day? Quick, quick, Partridge, and you, Sha Feng and Blalock. Ah, there's no door nor window—" we had passed clear around that annex "and yet there must be——"

"There must be an exit," I completed Hazard's sentence. "Koshinga wouldn't imprison himself, and besides——"

"The messages!" Hazard cried. "The messages must come out some way. And wires or wireless—any electrical device—impossible where there's no power. Let me think, let me think!"

For a few seconds we stood there, panting, pressing close to the low wall. Inside the temple the firing had increased. The fanatic fury of the Ko Lao Hui must have won them a way out of the cellar; or perhaps they had used an exit of which the Dalai Lama's men were ignorant.

That latter guess afterward proved to have been truth; the two forces were engaged in a suicidal fight at close quarters on the platform, while the priests, with the exception of the armed Mongolians, groveled for safety on the floor. Outside the bullets hummed angrily; the Debadjung troops and the Ko Lao Hui were racing each other for the temple. One of those bullets flicked the skin from Sha Feng's cheek; and he wiped the blood away languidly with his hand.

"A cube has six sides," he said; "a room——"

"Has six sides also," cried Hazard. "Sha Feng, I thank you. The roof—it must be. Partridge, give me a foot up."

I placed the hollow of my two clasped hands under his foot and tossed him up until he clutched the edge of the roof. He scrambled up somehow; and fell flat as if one of the bullets had reached him. But he was uninjured; he squirmed around and called down to us in a voice that had become suddenly cautious.

"It's here."

"What's there?"

"Come up. Unless we've a gun amongst us—Blalock, did they leave you a gun? No! Then come up, all of you. We'll all be needed."

For what? To grapple with Koshinga? In that case, the need was greater than our numbers. Death was closing in upon us from two quarters, for the Ko Lao Hui would know us for enemies and the troops of the Dalai Lama could not be expected to recognize us as friends; but the thought of physical contact with that monstrosity made the clean extermination promised by the rifle fire seem desirable.

But one is not always to choose even the form of his death; and I, being the strongest of the trio, helped Sha Feng and Blalock to mount the roof. Then, with a run and flying leap, I made it myself; and, crouching low, looked to see what Hazard had discovered.

There was a hole in the roof, a dozen feet from the eave. It was a square hole about three feet across, the edges of which were still raw from the saw. Here was a way to Koshinga if he was still in the room into which we had seen him pass—a dangerous way, a way that only one might take at a time, and Hazard was already crawling toward it.

But what was the purpose of that hole? When I remembered the width of Koshinga's great shoulders and of his arching chest, I knew it was no way to escape for him. What then? An avenue for messages, perhaps—but how conveyed?

By the same means, probably, that Koshinga had used to summon the priests here—but what was that means? I pondered those questions fruitlessly as I followed Hazard toward the opening, beneath which waited for us an experience from which my mind recoiled.

Also I noticed, during that ascent, that the Ko Lao Hui who had been hidden in the sand outnumbered the Dalai Lama's men two to one, that the Ko Lao Hui were already nearer the temple than the Debadjung troops, and were advancing faster. Even if we mastered Koshinga we would meet our end at their hands, we and the priests and the Dalai Lama himself—but I feared very much that we wouldn't master Koshinga.

When I withdrew my eyes from the Ko Lao Hui, I found the roof ahead of me empty; Hazard had dropped through the opening. An instant later I was looking down upon him; he was standing directly below me, straightening himself from his fall. I thrust my feet through the opening and dropped; and, mid-air, I saw Koshinga.

He had been bending over something in the corner of the room. Already he was whirling; he saw us, Hazard on the floor while I was still descending. I saw that the thing over which Koshinga had been bending was a bird cage which seemed to be fastened to the end of a long pole. A bird-cage larger than ordinary; but Koshinga, without uttering a sound, rushed upon us, and the glimpse I got of its feathered occupants was brief.

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Koshinga came, crouching, with the speed and force of a swung battering-ram, his wide-set, greenish eyes gleaming, his clutching hands extended, his fingers working with hate, his lips writhing with a smile. One would have thought from that smile that he welcomed us and I think he did.

He who was able to crush an ordinary man's head like an egg-shell, at a single blow, could have no thought of physical defeat; and when he saw Hazard and me, who had got in his way so many times, he must have instantly connected us with the last misfortune that had befallen him. A berserker rage must have possessed him as he leaped for us; and I think that his next few minutes were sweet—sweet with the wreaking of vengeance.

For we were no match for him, though we were three to one from the beginning, Blalock landing upon the floor behind us before Koshinga reached us. Unarmed, we were no match for him, even though he was also unarmed, a fortunate chance. Although, for that matter, he had never needed a personal weapon till then; others had fought for him.

Flat on the floor I flung myself when Koshinga was within six feet of me; and, hugging his ankles close, I plunged forward. Giant as he was, he came down; but some one else went to the floor also; it was Blalock, whom Koshinga struck a glancing blow, and knocked senseless. And Koshinga, falling on top of me, his head a little beyond my heels, reached back and caught my foot. He twisted once; and a terrific pain told me that my leg was dislocated at the knee.

He kicked once, and his own legs and feet were free. But Hazard had thrown himself on top of Koshinga's body lengthwise, attempting to throttle him with his hands while with his legs he gripped Koshinga around the middle. With a growl that might have come from some terrific primordial monster that had survived the passage of ages, Koshinga rolled half-over, reached back of his neck and tore Hazard's hands away from his throat.

In another moment Hazard's arms would have gone the way of my right leg, if they had not been torn entirely away, for the sinews of no man could withstand Koshinga's pulling power. But at that moment Sha Feng dropped down upon us, with his legs drawn up; and as he fell he straightened his legs and lashed out savagely at Koshinga's head.

It was a shrewd blow and a powerful one, with the weight and momentum of Sha Feng's body and all his kicking power behind it—a blow that would have knocked any other man unconscious. It momentarily weakened Koshinga, for Hazard was able to tear his wrists loose.

But before Hazard could get away completely Koshinga completed his turn and lay on his back, with Hazard beneath him. I was now on top; but before I could take advantage of my position, Koshinga caught me about the waist with both hands, and flung me away from him. Straight up into the air he flung me, and to his right, so that I landed on the floor at a distance of a dozen feet.

My crippled leg doubled up under me, racking me with the greatest agony I've ever known; blood spurted from my nose, and a blood-red haze hung before my eyes, so that I saw nothing clearly. But when I realized things, I was crawling back toward the writhing heap that was Koshinga and Hazard and Sha Feng, and with a queer, new, mad conviction underlying the realization of my own helplessness. A conviction, indeed, that was born of the very discovery that should have disheartened me most, the discovery of Koshinga's supernormal strength, greater than I'd imagined it, even.

It did not seem to me written in the scheme of things that such a creature should triumph, a creature who possessed the physical force of half a dozen orang-utans, mental subtlety in proportion, and a conscience that had no proper place on earth. But this was the last fight—so I saw the matter; if he escaped us here, we were undone, and China, and the world; and even as I denied the possibility of the thing in the light of any sane Providence I saw that he had escaped us.

KOSHINGA'S hands left Hazard's throat, and Hazard lay motionless. The monster leaped up lightly with Sha Feng clinging to him; and there was contempt in the easy swing of Koshinga's arm as he struck upward at the Chinaman. Sha Feng's jaw was driven to one side as though he had been hit by a sledge. His muscles relaxed, and he slipped limply to the floor. Koshinga glared around, saw me still crawling toward him and laughed horribly.

"Ah, the jackal has not yet had enough of the lion's fangs. How insensible you insect creatures are! Why, do you not know that with the weight of my foot I can crush your flesh into the very earth? And that I will presently do, but first— Listen!"

I listened, as he bade me, and heard the crackling rifle fire outside. Very heavy and near it was to the east, farther away and weaker from the west; and I knew by that sign that Koshinga was triumphant without the temple as he was within. And still I think I found strength to return him stare for stare.

"At least," I said, with what voice was left to me, "the priests——"

"Will never leave this place; and it is well. The dragon and the dragon's message will be buried here, and all who heard that message. They would have been dangerous as allies and more dangerous as enemies; but with them

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passes the power of the Taoist and Buddhist hierarchies, and nothing will stand against the Ko Lao Hui.

"Ten million faithful ones wait my word; and twice ten million will join them in the slaughter of those who oppose me. Now the word will be given; and because it will torture you, you shall witness the sending of the message; and then——"

Koshinga turned his back on me and strode across the room. Weakly I raised myself on my elbows and followed him with my eyes. He lifted the pole, on the end of which swung the bird-cage; and I saw that the cage was full of carrier-pigeons.

Swift, swift birds, doubtless already freighted with messages that meant the death of millions, messages that would be relayed as the summons to the priests had been relayed, the length and breadth of China. A string extended from the door of the cage to the end of the pole in Koshinga's hand; he was coming toward me, toward that hole in the roof through which the birds would be released. And I—I saw the door leading into the body of the temple open noiselessly, almost imperceptibly, and close again. I groaned aloud.

"So!" Koshinga mocked my groan. "Slave of your own emotions and an outgrown creed, is not this sight bitter to you? I wish that your pygmy companions were awake; it would add to my enjoyment. But they sleep, and soon their sleep will be sounder. Then you, having seen them die——"

With pain and difficulty I struggled till I stood upright on my one sound leg, propping myself with the other, and so confronted him, for now it seemed to me that I would willingly sell my soul into eternal torment for a single minute's delay. Amid hopelessness, hope persisted; and I had seen the opening of a door and had recalled that for some minutes the firing beyond that door had ceased.

Incoherent as was my thinking at that moment, I realized that if the Ko Lao Hui had won the battle inside the temple, they would be killing the priests as Koshinga had commanded them. The Dalai Lama had won then, and if I could but hold Koshinga, anger him into finishing me before loosing the birds——

"Evil perishes in the moment of its triumph," I cried out to him as loudly as I could. "So shall you, devil-man."

But I could not move fast enough to place myself squarely in his way; and he did not wait until he was directly under the opening that led to the wide spaces before thrusting the cage of carrier-pigeons upward. Then he paused a moment to laugh at me; while the door behind him opened again, and the orange-colored, impassive face of the Dalai Lama peered through it.

"There is no good nor evil, but power; and I possess it," said Koshinga.

And then the Dalai Lama fired.

Now I, John Partridge, saw this thing, which some will say is impossible. The bullet smashed through the back of Koshinga's skull, for the red blood spurted out. But Koshinga did not fall. The pole containing the bird-cage descended; he tried to raise it again, but I fell with my chest across it, bearing it down. Then Koshinga turned and rushed for the Dalai Lama, who stepped aside and fired another shot; and thus began a game of death that sickened me.

Dreadful had been Koshinga's life; dreadful was his end. Blindly with flailing arms he tried to get at that man who was pounding him with bullets, and who easily evaded him. He, who deserved no pity, won it from me; but I hoped, and still hope, that most of that staggering pursuit was like the unconscious movements of the stricken serpent which lives in tail and fang after it is dead.

The chambers of the Dalai Lama's revolver were empty when Koshinga was finally still; and I wondered dully—seeing all these things through a mist which veiled both my eyes and my understanding—why the Dalai Lama had been careful to leave Koshinga's face unmarred.

Good steel was in the Dalai Lama's sword, and strength in his arm, and the flesh of Koshinga was after all as the flesh of other men, nor could one hope for fineness of sensibility in that Tibetan warrior-priest; but presently I was also wondering of what possible use to him Koshinga's bloody head could be.

Nor did I quite understand when I saw that bloody head uplifted on the end of the pole in place of the bird-cage, and thrust by the Dalai Lama through the opening in the roof. He tossed it off the pole; and Koshinga's fighting followers, who had by now pressed close to the temple, received that ghastly relic almost upon their own heads.

It was at that same moment that those of the Dalai Lama's men who had survived the fight inside the temple opened fire upon the Ko Lao Hui through the windows of the place. But I learned that later. Then I only knew that confusion seemed to come upon the Ko Lao Hui attacking force, that their fire diminished and drew distant and ceased, that the Debadjung soldiers swept past the temple with wild yelling, and that afterward there was a silence.

And although I knew nothing of that unexpected close-range fire upon them the flight of the Ko Lao Hui didn't surprize me. It seemed clear that the fanatic courage that had been inspired by Koshinga's claim of omnipotence and immortality would naturally pass before the hideous evidence of the falsity of those claims.

One other picture I had before men burst in from the body of the temple—a picture of

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the Dalai Lama contemplating thoughtfully the headless body of Koshinga and speaking as if to himself, half-sadly:

"A lesson, a lesson for all who would rule. Now, if you had been satisfied with less than all power, Koshinga——"

"SO ALL things worked for Koshinga's destruction," said Hazard later at the end of an analytical monologue which I'd only partially followed. "We were only the instruments—Sha Feng, Blalock, you and I, and even the priests, who are now carrying the message of the dragon to every corner of China. If none of us had existed, truth would have found other instruments. That was the one thing Koshinga forgot—the cumulative weakness of a lie."

I shifted my position a little, trying to ease my still useless right leg. I was lying on a *k'ang* in the miserable best room of the one inn in Kan Chow, beyond which town it hadn't been thought expedient to move me until I got over my hurt. Of the four of us who had fought that last battle with Koshinga, I was the longest in recovering.

"It may be so," I replied, "but for all that it was lucky that Blalock found us in Peking."

"Poor Blalock!" murmured Hazard. "I wonder if he'll ever be quite right again. But I think he will, once in the States, away from all reminders of the thing that drove him mad. Lord knows I hope so, for if he did sin in joining the Ko Lao Hui, at least he was willing to give his own life in atonement. And ours, too," Hazard smiled quizzically.

"Some things," I said slowly, "aren't quite clear to me yet. Of course, I know that the body of the message the dragon delivered was really the instrument Blalock stole from the Ko Lao Hui headquarters after he'd realized the full vileness of the scheme to which he'd become a party. And I suppose the foreword, condemning Koshinga, was written by you after you'd stolen the document from Blalock and substituted another paper of similar size.

"Then in turn you substituted the document for the original message in the mouth of the mechanical dragon, to which chance—as you're modest enough to say—gave you access. Though as for that, the dragon was prophesied plainly enough and could hardly have been anywhere else. I think you assisted chance a bit. But why didn't you trust Blalock, whose intentions were surely good enough? Why did you take things altogether into your own hands?"

"Some might say that it was my natural egotism," grinned Hazard. "But one can't argue with a madman; and what was your own opinion of the practicability of Blalock's scheme? It was clever enough, knowing himself condemned by the Ko Lao Hui, to figure on winning a little respite for himself, and a chance to denounce Koshinga, by leading us to the Sacred Pass, and surrendering us. And it worked, with a little assistance from me, as you saw. But——"

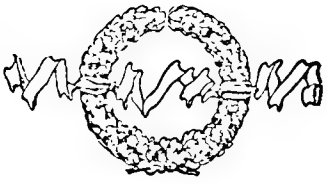
"The rest of his plan wouldn't have worked, that's true," I put in. "He'd have been killed the moment he opened his mouth against Koshinga. And now I begin to see why you did assist him, why you saw to it that there was no fight in the cellar. Hazard, that was once I lost confidence in you.

"But of course if there had been a fight, the Ko Lao Hui would have been suspicious of what had happened in the cellar before they arrived. They'd have investigated, found the dead Chinaman in the inner cellar, and the substituted message. As it was, Blalock had the gun from which the single shot had been fired and it was natural to think that he'd fired it against us."

"And I'd managed to hide the body of the dead Chinaman so that a casual searcher wouldn't be apt to find it," Hazard explained. "If he was missed, or if his assistance was needed to work the mechanism of the dragon and another man had to be substituted, then it was probably thought that he'd deserted his post or misunderstood his orders. So when the dragon spoke——"

"New China was saved," said I rhetorically, "and the walls of falsehood fell. Well, I guess that's all. It's good to know that Koshinga's gone, but Asia will be a bit duller without him. Hazard, when this underpinning of mine is mended, I think I'll feel like traveling."

"So will I," replied Hazard. "Homeward bound!"



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THE COWBOYS PASS

by Perrin Holmes Lowrey

OUT of the mesquite and out of the chaparral,
Out of the hills they came thundering down,
Reckless and ribald and rowdy with merriment,
Shocking the staid little streets of the town.
Flushed with the wine of the wind they came galloping—
Oh, how the thoroughfares clattered and rang!
Cow-punchers in for a night of hilarity,
Each on a demon he called a mustang.

MUSICAL hoofs beat an urge to adventuring;
Bits that were barbed held the broncos in check;
Pink were the nostrils blown wide with the breath of them;
White was the froth on each shoulder and neck.
Coiled at the horns were the loops of the lariats—
Huge were the saddles and heavy as hate;
Spurs that were sharpened and cunning in cruelty
Leaped to their flanks if they slackened their gait.

IN FROM the ranches the cowboys came galloping,
Sitting their saddles with insolent grace,
In from the mesquite and in from the chaparral,
In from the purple-gray stretches of space.
High were their spirits and careless of consequence,
Full of impertinence, color and verve.
Oh, how I thrilled at their daredevil wickedness,
Easy cool courage and nonchalant nerve!

THEY were a breed who would fight for the fun of it,
Throw down the challenge or pick up the glove;
Men with a creed that was boldness and brotherhood,
Quick to a quarrel and quicker to love.
Mirth-loving fellows—how rich was the drawl of them!
Stalwart and tanned by the kiss of the sun;
Big-hearted boys of a large camaraderie,
Mettlesome, fiery and quick with a gun.

INTO the bars they went, smoking and swaggering,
Threw down their coin with a flourish and bang,
Called to the crowd with a fine prodigality,
Ordered the drinks all around for the gang.
Spurning the greaser and taunting the tenderfoot,
Oh, what a picture they made in their chaps!
Bow-legged fellows with guns at the belts of them,
Eager for friendship and eager for scraps.

GONE are the girls and the games and the revelry.
Gone are the jazz and the jibe and the jest.
Darkness has settled at last on the liquor joints,
Ending the days of the wide-open West.
Yet, through the streets in the shadowy silences,
Horsemen are galloping, galloping—hark!
Dreamy and dim as the mists of remembering,
Cowboys are galloping into the dark.

INTO the dimness, like ghosts, they go galloping
Into the night—and the stars are agleam!
Riders impalpable, quietly vanishing
Into the shadowy regions of dream.
Out on the prairies their spirits are galloping,
Galloping, galloping, never at rest,
Into the mesquite and into the chaparral,
Into the heart of the Infinite West.

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SETH BULLOCK

Sheriff of the Black Hills Country

by KERMIT ROOSEVELT

THE BREAKING OF THE LINK

WITH the death of Seth Bullock of Deadwood, South Dakota, there came to us who were his friends not only a deep sense of personal loss, but also the realization that one of the very last of the old school of frontiersman had gone—one of those whom Lowell characterized as "Stern men with Empires in their brains."

The hard hand of circumstance called forth and developed the type; and for a number of generations the battle with the wilderness continued in bitter force, and a race was brought forth trained to push on far beyond the "edge of cultivation," and contend in his remote fastnesses with the Red Indian, and eke out a hard-earned existence from the grim and resentful wilds. In the wake of the vanguard came the settler, and after him the merchant, and busy towns sprang up where the lonely camp-fire of the pioneer had flared to the silent forest. The restless blood of the frontiers pressed ever onward; the Indian melted away like "snow upon the desert's dusty face;" the great herds of game that formerly blackened the plains left the mute testimony of their passing in the scattered piles of whitened skulls and bleached bones.

At last the time came when there was no further frontier to conquer. The restless race of empire-makers had staring them in the face the same fate as the Indian. Their rough-and-ready justice, administered out of hand, had to give way before the judge with his court-house and his jury.

The majority of the old Indian fighters were shouldered aside and left to end their days as best they could, forgotten by those for whom they had won the country. They could not adapt themselves to the new existence; their day had past and they went to join the Indian and the buffalo.

Captain Seth Bullock, however, belonged to the minority, for no turn of the wheel could destroy his usefulness to the community, and his large philosophy of the plains enabled him to fit in and hold his place through every shift of surroundings. The captain's family came from Virginia but he was born in Windsor, Ontario, in 1849. Before he was twenty he had found his way to Montana, and built for himself a reputation for justice which at that day and in that community could be established only by cold and dauntless courage.

One of the feats of his early days of which he was justly proud was when he had himself hanged the first man to be hanged by law in Montana. The crowd of prospectors and cow-punchers did not approve of such an unusual method of procedure as the hanging of a man by a public hangman after he had been duly tried and sentenced. They wished to take the prisoner and string him up to the nearest tree or telegraph pole with the neatness and dispatch to which they were accustomed. To evidence their disapproval they started to shoot at the hangman; he fled, but before the crowd could secure their victim the captain had the mastery of the situation, and quieting his turbulent fellow citizens with a cold eye and a relentless six-shooter he himself performed the task that the hangman had left unfinished.

The incident inspired the mob with a salutary respect for the law and its ability to carry out its sentences. I do not remember whether the captain was mayor or sheriff at the time. He was trusted and admired as well as feared, and when he was barely twenty-two he was elected State senator from Helena, the largest town in the then Territory of Montana.

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It was in 1876 that the captain first went to the Black Hills, that lovely group of mountains in the southwestern corner of South Dakota. He came with the first rush of prospectors when the famous Hidden Treasure mine was discovered. On the site of what is at present the town of Deadwood he set up a store for miners' supplies; and soon had established himself as the arm of the law in that very lawless community.

That was the captain's rule all through his life. In the early years he would spend day and night in the saddle in pursuit of rustlers and road-agents. When he once started on the trail nothing could make him relinquish it; and when he reached the end his quarry would better surrender without drawing. He had a long arm and his district was known throughout the west as an unhealthful place for badmen.

Starting as Federal peace officer of the Black Hills, he later became marshal and sheriff of the district and eventually marshal of South Dakota, which position he held until 1914. As years and civilization advanced his bag of malefactors became less simple in character, although maintaining some of the old elements. In 1908 he wrote me:

> I have been very busy lately; pulled two horse-thieves from Montana last week for stealing horses from the Pine Ridge Indians. I leave today for Leavenworth with a bank cashier for mulling a bank. He may turn up on Wall Street when his term expires to take a post-graduate course.

In 1907 he told me that he was going off among the Ute Indians, and I asked him to get me some of their pipes. He answered:

> The Utes are not pipe-makers; they spend all their time rustling and eating government grub. We had six horse thieves for the pen after the last term of court, and should get four more at the June term in Pierre. This will keep them quiet for a while. I am now giving my attention to higher finance, and have one of the Napoleons—a bank president—in jail here. He only got away with one hundred and six thousand dollars—he did not have time to become eligible for the Wall Street class.

IT WAS when the captain was sheriff of the Black Hills that father first met him. A horse-thief that was "wanted" in the Deadwood district managed to slip out of the captain's clutches and was captured by father, who was deputy sheriff in a county three or four hundred miles north.

A little while later father had to go to Deadwood on business. Fording a river some miles out of town he ran into the captain. Father had often heard of Seth Bullock, for his record and character were known far and wide, and he had no difficulty in identifying the tall, slim, hawk-featured Westerner sitting his horse like a centaur.

Seth Bullock however did not know so much about father, and was very suspicious of the rough, unkempt group just in from two weeks' sleeping out in the gumbo and sage-brush. He made up his mind that it was a tin-horn gambling outfit and would bear watching. He wasn't sure but what it would be best to turn them right back and let them walk around his district "like it was a swamp." After settling father's identity the captain's suspicions vanished. That was the beginning of their lifelong friendship.

After father had returned to the East to live Seth Bullock would come on to see him every so often, and whenever my father's campaigning took him West the captain would join the train and stay with him until the trip was finished. These tours were rarely without incident, and in his autobiography father has told of the part Seth Bullock played on one of them.

> When in 1900 I was nominated for Vice-President I was sent by the National Committee on a trip into the States of the high plains and the Rocky Mountains. These had all gone overwhelmingly for Mr. Bryan on the free-silver issue four years previously, and it was thought that I, because of my knowledge of and acquaintanceship with the people, might accomplish something toward bringing them back into line.
>
> It was an interesting trip, and the monotony usually attendant upon such a campaign of political speaking was diversified in vivid fashion by occasional hostile audiences. One or two of the meetings ended in riots. One meeting was finally broken up by a mob; everybody fought so that the speaking had to stop.
>
> Soon after this we reached another town where we were told there might be trouble. Here the local committee included an old and valued friend, a "two-gun" man of repute, who was not in the least quarrelsome, but who always kept his word. We marched round to the local opera house, which was packed with a mass of men, many of them rather rough-looking. My friend the two-gun man sat immediately behind me, a gun on each hip, his arms folded, looking at the audience; fixing his gaze with instant intentness on any section of the house from which there came so much as a whisper. The audience listened with rapt attention.
>
> At the end with a pride in my rhetorical powers which proceeded from a misunderstanding of the situation I remarked to the chairman—
>
> "I held that audience well; there wasn't an interruption."
>
> To which the chairman replied:
>
> "Interruption? Well, I guess not! Seth had sent round word that if any son of a gun peeped he'd kill him!

Father had the greatest admiration and affection for the captain. It was to him that he was referring in his Autobiography when he wrote—

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I have sometimes been asked if Wister's *Virginian* is not overdrawn; why, one of the men I have mentioned in this chapter was in all essentials the *Virginian* in real life, not only in his force but in his charm.

When we were hunting in Africa father decided that he would try to get Seth Bullock to meet us in Europe at the end of the trip. I remembered father describing him to some of our English friends in Khartum and saying:

"Seth Bullock is a true Westerner, the finest type of frontiersman. He could handle himself in any situation, and if I felt that I did not wish him to meet any particular person, the reflection would be entirely on the latter."

The captain wrote me that he was afraid he could not meet us in London because of the illness of one of his daughters, but matters eventually worked out in such a way that he was able to go over to England, and when he met father there he said he felt like hanging his Stetson on the dome of Saint Paul's and shooting it off to show his exhilaration at the reunion. He thoroughly enjoyed himself in England, and while at bottom he was genuinely appreciative of the Britisher he could not help poking sly fun at him.

I remember riding on a bus with him and hearing him ask the conductor where this famous Piccalilli Street was. The conductor said—

"You must mean Piccadilly, sir."

The captain entered into a lengthy conversation with him, and with an unmoved stolidity of facial expression that no Red Indian could have bettered referred each time to "Piccalilli," and each time the little bus conductor would interpose a, "You mean Piccadilly, sir," with the dogged persistency of his race.

The major-domos and lackeys at the Guildhall and other receptions and the "Beef-Eaters" at the Tower were a never failing source of delight; he would try to picture them on a bad pony in the cow country, and explained that their costume would "make them the envy of every Sioux brave at an Indian dog dance."

When my sister and I were in Edinburgh the local guide who took us through the Castle showed us an ancient gun which instead of being merely double-barreled possessed a cluster of five or six barrels. With great amusement he told us how an American to whom he had been showing the piece a few days previously had remarked that to be shot at with that gun must be like taking a shower-bath. A few questions served to justify the conclusion we had immediately formed as to the identity of our predecessor.

THE Summer that I was fourteen father shipped me off to the Black Hills for a camping-trip with Seth Bullock. I had often seen him in the East, so the tall spare figure and the black Stetson were familiar to me when the captain boarded the train a few stations before reaching Deadwood.

Never shall I forget the romance of that first trip in the West. It was all new to me. Unfortunately I had to return East for school before the opening of the deer season; but we caught a lot of trout and had some unsuccessful bear-hunts—hunts which were doomed to unsuccess before they started, but which supplied the requisite thrill, notwithstanding. All we ever found of the bear was their tracks, but we had a fleeting glimpse of a bobcat, and that was felt amply to repay any amount of tramping. Our bag consisted of one jack-rabbit.

The captain told us that we were qualified to join a French trapper whom he had known. The Frenchman was caught by an unusually early Winter and snowed in away off in the hills. In the Spring a good deal to every one's surprize he turned up looking somewhat thin but apparently totally unconcerned over his forced hibernation. When asked what he had lived on he replied—

"One day I keel two jack-rabbit, one day one, one day none!"

The captain and I took turns at writing my diary. I find his entry for August twenty-sixth:

> Broke camp at Jack Boyden's on Sand Creek at 6:30 A.M. and rode *via* Red Water Valley and Hay Creek to Belle Fourche, arriving at the S. B. Ranch at two o'clock; had lunch of cold cabbage; visited the town; returned to camp at 5 P.M. had supper at the wagon and fought mosquitoes until ten o'clock.
>
> Broke camp and rode *via* Owl Creek Divide and Indian Creek through several very large towns inhabited chiefly by prairie dogs to our camp at Porcupine Creek. Fought mosquitoes from 3 A.M. to breakfast.

I had long been an admirer of Bret Harte, and many of the people I met might have stepped from the pages of his stories. There was the old miner with twenty-two children, who couldn't remember all their names. His first wife had presented him with ten of them, but when he married again he had told his second wife that it was his initial venture in matrimony.

He gave a vivid description of the scene when some of the progeny of his first marriage unexpectedly put in an appearance. Time had smoothed things over, and the knowledge of her predecessor had evidently only acted as a spur to greater deeds as exemplified in the twelve additions to the family.

Then there was the old lady with the vinegar jug. She was the postmistress of Buckhorn. We had some difficulty in finding the post-office, but at length we learned that the postmistress had moved it fifteen miles away to across the State border in order that she might live in Wyoming and have a vote.

We reached the shack to find it deserted but we had not long to wait before she rode in,

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purple in the face and nearly rolling off her pony from laughter. She told us that she had got some vinegar from a friend, and while she was riding along the motion exploded the jug and the cork hit her in the head; what with the noise and the blow, she made sure the Indians were after her, and rode for her life a couple of miles before she realized what had happened.

What could have surpassed the names of the trails along which we rode, and the cañons in which we camped? There was Hidden Treasure Gulch, and Calamity Hollow, and a score more equally satisfying.

The trip was an immense success; and all during the Winter that followed when school life became particularly irksome I would turn to plans for the expedition that we had scheduled for the Summer.

When the time to leave for the West arrived I felt like an old stager, and indulged for the first time in the delight of getting out my outfit, deciding what I needed, and supplementing my last Summer's rig with other things that I had found would be useful.

Like all beginners I imagined that I required a lot for which I had in reality no possible use. Some men always set off festooned like Christmas trees and lose half the pleasure of the trip through trying to keep track of their belongings. They have special candles, patented lanterns, enormous jack-knives with a special blade to fulfil every conceivable purpose; rifles, revolvers and shotguns galore; almost everything that comes under the classification of "it might come in handy."

The most affluent hunter varies only in the quality and not the quantity of his "gadgets." He usually has each one neatly tucked away in a pigskin case. The wise man, however, soon learns that although anything may "come in handy" once on a trip you could even on that occasion either get along without it or find a substitute that would do almost as well. It is surprizing with what a very little one can get along perfectly comfortably. This was a lesson which I very quickly learned from the captain.

THE second trip that we took was from Deadwood, South Dakota, to Medora, North Dakota. I had never seen the country in which father ranched, and Seth Bullock decided to take me up along the trail that father had been traveling when they met for the first time.

We set off on Friday the thirteenth, and naturally everything that happened was charged up to that inauspicious day. We lost all our horses the first night out and succeeded in retrieving only a part of them. Thereafter it started in raining, and the gumbo mud became all but impassable for the "chuck-wagon." The mosquitoes added to our misery, and I find in my diary in the captain's handwriting a note to the effect that "Paul shot three mosquitoes with a six shooter; Stanley missed with a shotgun."

The captain was as stolid and unconcerned as a Red Indian through every change of weather. He had nicknamed me "Kim" from Kipling's tale, and after me he had named a large black horse which he always rode. It was an excellent animal with a very rapid walk which proved the bane of my existence. My pony, "Pickpocket," had no pace that corresponded, and to adapt himself was forced to travel at a most infernal jiggle that was not only wearing but shook me around so that the rain permeated into all sorts of crevices which might reasonably have been expected to prove water-tight.

With the pride of a boy on his second trip I could not bring myself to own up to my discomfort. If I had the captain would have instantly changed his pace; but it seemed a soft and unwestern admission to make, so I suffered in external silence, while inwardly heaping every insult I could upon the captain's mount. We were traveling long distances, so the gait was rarely changed unless I made some excuse to loiter behind, and then walked my pony in slow and solitary comfort until the captain was almost out of sight and it was time to press into a lope which comfortably and far too rapidly once more put me even with him.

The captain was a silent companion; he would ride along hour after hour chewing a long black cigar in a silence broken only by verses he would hum to himself. There was one song which went on interminably beginning:

> I wonder if ever a cowboy
> Will be seen in those days along to come.
> I wonder if ever an Indian
> Will be seen in that far by and by.

Every now and then some butte would suggest a reminiscence of the early days, and a few skilfully directed questions would lure him into a chain of anecdotes of the already vanished border-life. He was continually coming out with a quotation from some author with whose writings I had never thought him acquainted. Fishing in a Black Hills stream I heard him mutter—

> "So you heard the left fork of the Yuba
> As you stood on the banks of the Po."

He had read much of Kipling's prose and poetry, but what he most often quoted were the lines to "Fighting Bob" Evans.

In his house in Deadwood he had a good library, the sort of one which made you feel that the books had been selected to read and enjoy, and not bought by the yard like window-curtains or any other furnishings thought necessary for a house. Mrs. Bullock was president

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of the Women's Literary Club, and I remember father being much impressed with the work that she was doing.

As I have said before the captain was a man whom changing conditions could not throw to one side. He would anticipate the changes and himself take the lead in them, adapting himself to the new conditions. You could count upon finding him on top. He was very proud of the fact that he had brought the first alfalfa to the State, and showed me his land near Belle Fourche where he had planted the original crop. Its success was immediate.

He said that he could not claim the credit of having introduced potatoes, but an old friend of his was entitled to the honor, and he delighted in telling the circumstances. The captain's friend, whom we can call Judge Jones, for I've forgotten his name, had opened a trading-post in what was at that time the wild Territory of Dakota. The Indians were distinctly hostile, and at any good opportunity were ready to raid the posts, murdering the factors and looting the traders' goods. In the judge's territory there was one particularly ugly customer, half-Indian and half-negro, known as "Nigger Bill." The judge was much interested in the success of his potatoes; and the following was one of the letters he received from his factor, as Seth Bullock used to quote it to me:

DEAR JUDGE:

This is to tell you all is well here and I hope is same with you. Nigger Bill came to the door of the stockade today and said, "I am going to get in." I said, "Nigger Bill, you will not get in," and Nigger Bill said. "I will get in." I shot Nigger Bill; he is dead. The potatoes is doing fine.

Although realizing to the full that the change was inevitable and of course to the best interests of the country, and naturally taking much pride in the progress his State was making, the captain could not at times help feeling melancholy over the departed days when there was no wire in the country and one could ride wherever one listed. He wrote me in 1911—

The part of South Dakota which you knew has all been covered with the shacks of homesteaders, from Belle Fourche to Medora, and from the Cheyenne agency to the Creek where the Old Woman died.

The old times had gone, never to return, and although the change was an advance it closed an existence that could never be forgotten or relived by those who had taken part in it.

The captain gave me very sound advice when I was trying to make up my mind whether or not to go to college. I was at the time going through the period of impatience that comes to so many boys when they feel that they are losing valuable time, during which they should be starting in to make their way in the world. I had talked it over with the captain during one of the Summer trips, and soon afterward he wrote me:

Ride the old studies with spurs. I don't like the idea of your going out to engage in business until you have gone through Harvard. You will have plenty of time after you have accomplished this to tackle the world. Take my advice, my boy, and don't think of it. A man without a college education is badly handicapped nowadays. If he has had the opportunity to go through college and does not take advantage of it he goes through life with a regret that becomes more intensified as he gets older.

Life is a very serious proposition if we would live it well.

I went through college and I have often realized since how excellent his advice was, and marveled not a little at the many-sidedness of the frontiersman who could appraise that particular situation so clearly.

THE year before I went with my father to Africa, R. H. Munro Ferguson and myself joined the captain in South Dakota for a prairie-chicken hunt. We were to shoot in the vicinity of the Cheyenne Indian Reservation, and the captain took us through the reservation to show us how the Indian question was being handled. The court was excellently run; but what impressed me most was the judge's name, for he was called "Judge No Heart."

Some of our hunting-companions rejoiced in equally unusual names; there were Spotted Rabbit, No Flesh, Yellow Owl and High Hawk, not to mention Spotted Horses, whose prolific wife was known as Mrs. Drops-Two-At-A-time.

We had with us another man named Dave Snowball, who looked and talked just like a southern darky. As a matter of fact he was half-Indian and half-negro. In the old days negro slaves not infrequently escaped and joined the Indians.

I went to see Dave's father. There was no mistaking him for what he was—but when I spoke to him he would answer me in Sioux and the only English words I could extract from him were, "No speak English." He may have had some hazy idea that if he spoke English some one would arrest him and send him back to his old masters, although they had probably been dead for thirty or forty years. Possibly, living so long among the Sioux, he had genuinely forgotten the language of his childhood.

High Hawk and Olive Black Hawk were old "hostiles." So was Red Bear. We came upon him moving house. The teepee had just been dismantled, and the support-poles were being secured to a violently objecting pony.

A few weeks later when we were on the train

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going East Frederic Remington joined us. He was returning from Montana, and upon hearing that we had been on the Cheyenne Reservation he asked if we had run into old Red Bear, who had once saved his life.

He told us that many years before he had been picked up by a party of hostiles, and they had determined to give him short shrift, when Red Bear, with whom he had previously struck up a friendship, turned up and successfully interceded with his captors. One reminiscence led to another, and we were soon almost as grateful to Red Bear for having opened such a store of narrative as Remington had been for having his life spared. Frederic Remington was a born *raconteur*, and pointed his stories with a bluff homely philosophy, redolent of the plains and the sage-brush.

The night before we left the Indians the captain called a council. All the old hostiles and many of the younger generation gathered. The peace-pipes circulated.

We had brought with us from New York a quantity of German porcelain pipes to trade with the Indians. Among them was one monster with a bowl that must have held from an eighth to a quarter of a pound of tobacco.

The Indians ordinarily smoke *kinnikinick*, which is chopped-up willow bark. It is mild and gives a pleasant aromatic smoke. The tobacco which we had was a coarse, strong shag. We filled the huge pipe with it and, lighting it passed it round among the silent, solemn figures grouped about the fire.

The change was as instantaneous as it was unpremeditated. The nearest brave drew deeply and inhaled a few strong puffs; with a choking splutter he handed the pipe to his nearest companion. The scene was repeated and as each Indian, heedless of the fate of his comrades, inhaled the smoke of the strong shag he would break out coughing, until the pipe had completed the circuit and the entire group was coughing in unison. Order was restored and willow bark substituted for tobacco with satisfactory results.

Next we each tried our hand at speaking. One by one the Indians took up the thread, grunting out their words between puffs. The firelight rose and fell, lighting up the shrouded shapes. When my turn came I spoke through an interpreter. Coached by the captain as to what were their most lamentable failings—those that most frequently were the means of his making their acquaintance—I gave a learned discourse upon the evils of rustling ponies and the pleasant life that lay before those who abstained from doing so. Grunts of approval, how sincere I knew not, were the gratifying reply to my efforts.

The powwow broke up with a substantial feast of barbecued sheep, and next morning we left our nomadic hosts to continue their losing fight to maintain their hereditary form of existence hemmed in by an ever encroaching white man's civilization.

Near the reservation we came upon two old outlaw buffaloes; last survivors of the great herds that not so many years previously had roamed those plains providing food and clothing for the Indians until wiped out by the ruthless and improvident white man. These two bulls, living on because they were too old and tough for any one to bother about, were the last survivors left in freedom.

A few days later Scottie Phillips showed us his herd. He had many pure breeds, but more hybrids; and the latter looked the healthier. Scottie had done a valuable work in preserving these buffalo. He was a squaw-man, and his pleasant Indian wife gave us excellent buffalo-berry preserves that she had put up.

Scottie's ranch typified the end of both buffalo and Indian. Before a generation is past the buffalo will survive only in the traces of it left by crossing it with cattle; and the same fate eventually awaits the Indian. No matter how wise be the course followed in governing the remnants of the Indian race, it can only be a question of time before their individuality sinks and they are absorbed.

THE Spring following this expedition I set off with father for Africa. The captain took a great deal of interest in the plans for the trip. A week before we sailed he wrote:

> I sent you today by American Express the best gun I know of you to carry when in Africa. It is a single-action Colt .38 on a heavy frame. It is a business weapon, always reliable, and will shoot where you hold it. When loaded, carry it on the safety or first cock of the hammer.

Seth Bullock was a hero-worshiper and father was his great hero. It would have made no difference what father did or said, the captain would have been unshakably convinced without going into the matter at all that father was justified. There is an old adage that runs, "Any one can have friends that will stand by him when he's right; what you want is friends that stand by you when you're wrong." Seth Bullock, had occasion ever demanded it, would have been one of the latter.

In the Cuban War he was unable to get into the Rough Riders, and so joined a cowboy regiment which was never fortunate enough to get over to Cuba. All its casualties, and there were plenty of them, came from typhoid fever in a camp somewhere in the South. He was however made a sort of honorary member of the Rough Riders and when there were informal reunions held in Washington he was counted upon to take part in them.

He was a favorite with every one, from the

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White House ushers to the French Ambassador. As an honorary member of the Tennis Cabinet he was present at the farewell dinner held in the White House three days before father left the Presidency. A bronze cougar by Proctor had been selected as a parting gift, and it was concealed under a mass of flowers in the center of the table. The captain had been chosen to make the presentation speech, and when he got up and started fumbling with flowers to disclose the cougar father could not make out what had happened.

The captain, as he said himself, was a poor hand at saying good-by. He was in New York shortly before we sailed for Africa, but wrote—

> I must leave here today for Sioux Falls; then again I am a mollycoddle when it comes to bidding good-by; can always easier write good-by than speak it.

His gloomy forebodings about the Brazilian trip were well justified. He was writing me to South America:

> I was glad to hear you will be with your father. I have been uneasy about this trip of his, but now that I know you are along I will be better satisfied. I don't think much of that country you are to explore as a health resort, and there are no folks like home folks when one is sick.

The captain made up his mind that if his regiment had failed to get to the Cuban War the same thing would not a happen in the case of another war. In July, 1916, when the Mexican situation seemed even more acute than usual I heard from the captain:

> If we have war with Mexico, you and I will have to go. I am daily in receipt of applications from the best riders in the country. Tell the colonel I have carried out his plan for the forming of a regiment, and within fifteen days from getting word from him will have a regiment for his division that will meet with his approval. You are to have a captaincy to start with.
>
> I don't think Wilson will fight without he is convinced it will aid in his election. He is like Artemus Ward—willing to sacrifice his wife's relations on the altar of his country.

The Mexican situation continued to drag along, but we at length entered the European War, and for a while it looked as if my father would be allowed to raise a division and take it over to the other side. The captain had already the nucleus of his regiment, and the telegrams passed fast and furious. However, for reasons best known to the authorities in Washington it all turned out to be to no purpose. He wrote me out to Mesopotamia, when I was serving in the British forces:

> I was very much disgusted with Wilson when he turned us down. I had a splendid organization twelve hundred strong, comprising four hundred miners from the Black Hills mines, four hundred railroad boys from the lines of the Chicago and Northwestern and the C. B. & Q. in South Dakota, Western Nebraska and Wyoming, and four hundred boys from the ranges of Western South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. It was the pick of the country.
>
> Your troop was especially good. While locally known as the Deadwood troop most of the members were from the country northwest of Belle Fourche. Twenty of your troop were Sioux who had served on the Indian police. Sixty-five per cent. of the regiment had military training. —— the dirty politics that kept us from going!
>
> I am busy now locally with the Red Cross and the exemption board of this country, being chairman of each. We will show them that we are thoroughbreds and will do our bit even if we are compelled to remain at home.

After expatiating at some length and with great wealth of detail as to just what he thought of the attitude of the Administration, the captain continued with some characteristic advice:

> I am going to caution you now on being careful when you are on the firing-line. Don't try for any Victoria Cross or lead any forlorn hopes; modern war does not require these sacrifices, nor are battles won that way nowadays. I wouldn't have you fail in any particular of a brave American soldier, and I know you won't, but there is a vast difference between bravery and foolhardiness, and a man with folks at home is extremely selfish if unnecessarily foolhardy in the face of danger.

All of it very good sound advice, and just such as the captain might have been expected to give, but the last in the world that any one would have looked for him to follow personally. The letter ended with:

> I think the war will be over this year. I did want to ride a spotted cayuse into Berlin, but it don't look now as if I would.

The next time that I heard from the captain was some time after I had joined the American Expeditionary Force in France. In characteristic fashion he addressed the letter merely "care of General Pershing, France," and naturally three or four months elapsed before it finally reached me. The captain had been very ill, but he treated the whole matter as a joke:

> I have just returned from California, where I was on the sick list since last December, six months in a hospital and Sanatorium while the doctors were busy with knives and nearly took me over the divide. I am recovering slowly, and hope to last till the Crown Prince and his murdering progenitor are hung.
>
> I was chairman of the Exemption Board in 1917 and stuck to it until I was taken ill with grippe which ended in an intestinal trouble which required the services of two surgeons and their willing knives to combat it. The folks came to

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California after the remains, but when they arrived they found the remains sitting up and cussing the Huns.

Now, Kim, take care of yourself; don't get reckless. Kill all the Huns you can, but don't let them have the satisfaction of getting you.

My father's death was a fearful blow to the old captain. Only those who knew him well realized how hard he was hit. He immediately set to work to arrange some monument to my father's memory.

With the native good taste that ever characterized him, instead of thinking in terms of statues he decided that the dedication of a mountain would be most fitting, and determined to make the shaft to be placed upon its summit simple in both form and inscription. Father was the one honorary member of the Society of Black Hills Pioneers, and it was in conjunction with this society that the captain arranged that Sheep Mountain, a few miles away from Deadwood, should be renamed Mount Roosevelt.

General Wood made the address. A number of my friends who were there gave me the latest news of the captain. He wrote me that he expected to come East in September; that he was not feeling very fit; and that he was glad to have been able to go through with the dedication of the mountain. He was never the sort of person to talk about himself, so I have no way of knowing other than intuition, but I am certain that he felt all along that his days were numbered, and held on mainly in order to accomplish his purpose of raising the memorial.

I waited until the middle of September and then wrote to Deadwood to ask the captain when he would be coming. I found the reply in the newspapers a few days later. The captain was dead. The gallant old fellow had crossed the divide that he wrote about, leaving behind him not merely the sorrow of his friends but their pride in his memory.

Well may we feel proud of having been numbered among the friends of such a thoroughgoing, upstanding American as Seth Bullock. As long as our country produces men of such caliber we may face the future with a consciousness of our ability to win through such dark days as may confront us. The changings and shiftings that have ever accompanied our growth never found Seth Bullock at a loss; he was always ready.

> Turn a keen untroubled face
> Home, to the instant need of things.

Throughout his well-rounded and picturesque career he coped with the varied problems that confronted him in that unostentatious and unruffled way so peculiarly his own, with which he faced the final and elemental fact of his recall from service.

The FLEETS of FORAY

by Samuel Alexander White

Author of "The Void Spaces," "Sunless Seas," etc.

FROM his camp on Lake Superior's shore the free trader, Hugh Gilroy, stared at the straggling band breaking over Grande Portage at the Pigeon River's mouth. He could count three dozen packers tearing down the narrow footpath that dropped sheer through the wooded Laurentian mountain-slope to the crescent sand shore under his feet. Even at that distance he recognized them as his own packers; Georges Landreau in front, his Caughnawaga canoemen rushing on Georges' heels, and from their disheveled appearance he knew that something was seriously wrong.

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With his Montreal brigade, westward-bound this Spring of 1767, he had beached at the Pigeon River's mouth at noon and sent over the Big Carry the cargoes of his canoes on the backs of these men, and here they were racing back at evening as if all the demons reputed to haunt the forest beyond were in pursuit. Bare-headed they skimmed along, their scanty attire half-torn from their backs, even their pack-straps gone; dropping from tier to tier of the wooded ranges that soared one thousand feet above them till they finally came out at the foot of rocky palisades that walled the base of the hills.

Along the rocky palisades and across the level flat of sand that spread to the water's edge they ran, skirting the post of the Montreal fur-house of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray and heading straight for Gilroy's camp on the beach.

"What's the matter, Georges?" demanded Gilroy, stepping out from his little shelter-tent to meet them.

"Ba gar, de Pillagers, dose *coureurs des bois* an' Chippewa thieves of de Rainy River country," gasped Georges. "Dey strike lak lightnin' as we be come across de portage to de Pigeon River's bank at Fort Charlotte an' plunder de goods. *Mon Dieu*, ain't even have taim to save de pack-straps."

The Pillagers! Gilroy hardly needed Georges' stark words as explanation. Ever since the first young Frenchman, Jacques de Noyon, wintered at the mouth of Rainy River the Chippewas had been a menace on the western fur-route. The French officer, La Noue, had felt their hand and La Verendrye's nephew, La Jemeraye, when he went to build his fort on Rainy Lake.

Reinforced by roaming *coureurs des bois* and bushwhackers in later years, their operations continued till they earned for themselves the fitting name of the Pillagers. Theft, blackmail, extortion was their delight. Even the most powerful of the Montreal merchants had been plundered regularly, Henry's, Curry's, the Frobishers' canoe fleets paying toll to the pillaging band under a renegade French officer, Gabriel Deschamps, till at last the firm of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray was forced to bribe Deschamps with a partnership in their company and thus purchase immunity for their fleets by including him in their house.

Yet although there was immunity for McTavish's fleets, Gilroy well knew there was no immunity for the fleets of competing traders. McTavish, the domineering king of the fur-trade in Montreal, the man who had earned the nickname of "the Marquis," had compassed a merger, and Deschamps' Pillagers he used as another weapon with which to bludgeon competition.

As he decreed from his Montreal throne, he did not countenance free traders in the West, so they went there only at their own risk. Gilroy was there at his own risk. He expected trouble with Deschamps' Pillagers on the Rainy River route, but he had not expected it so soon, and Georges Landreau's announcement that he had met it at the Fort Charlotte end of Grande Portage was like a blow in Gilroy's face.

"At Fort Charlotte, Georges," he exploded in angry amazement. "By Jove, Gabriel Deschamps and his Pillagers are getting bold, operating so close to Grande Portage. Next thing they'll try to close it. At Fort Charlotte, indeed—only nine miles from Lake Superior! Why, Deschamps might as well gather his scum of the woods here on Grande Portage Bay and take our stuff right off the beach."

"*Oui*," nodded Landreau moodily, "an' dat's de third cargo we be lose wit'in t'ree years."

"And the last cargo, Georges," prophesied Gilroy grimly. "How many Pillagers were there?"

"Ba gar, scores of dem," declared Landreau. "Wan hundred, mebbe. We ain't have de chance to count for sure w'ile dey be smashin' our heads wit' paddles, but dey smother us lak *enfants* in wan rush. She's t'ree to wan an' dere ain't any use fightin' an' losin' good canoemen, so we break back over de portage an' save our skins."

"In force as usual," Gilroy gritted. "And of course, as usual, Deschamps wasn't plundering with them, eh?"

Georges Landreau shook his head.

"*Non*, I'm t'ink not. She was queeck rush, but I ain't see de face of Gabriel Deschamps in de crowd. He'll be have hees lieutenants for dat job an' he'll be most likely here in Grande Portage yet. You remembaire we spik heem at noon w'en we arrive?"

"Yes, he was waiting for the meeting of his partners in the McTavish firm tonight he said," Gilroy growled. "A pose, Georges. Keeping up a blind while his Pillagers plunder westward-bound free-trade expeditions which dare to compete with them for the fur. But his blind won't save his face this time. He has struck me too near home, and I'm going to have my cargo back or Deschamps is going to pay a mighty price for it.

"Sit down here, Georges, you and the Caughnawagas, about the fires. Have some food and rest yourselves till I come back from their post over yonder. I can't tell, but there may be more swift work for you to do tonight."

GLADLY the spent canoemen headed by Landreau accepted Gilroy's invitation, throwing themselves at full length on the sandy ground and falling like famished beings on the food and steaming tea

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that hung in kettles over tiny cooking-fires, while Gilroy himself strode away along the level shore to confront Gabriel Deschamps in the post of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray.

As he went he passed other brigades from Montreal, just arriving and beaching on the curve of Grande Portage Bay. There were more than usual this Summer, for the ink was dry on the articles of the capitulation of Montreal, and the westward flow of adventure-seekers which had been checked by the long siege of war had surged afresh.

Before the French régime had ended, *voyageur*-manned canoes had cut Lake Superior's waters on the fortune-trail, and now they came in increased numbers, Montreal fur-trading brigades, brave fleets of foray suddenly invading that West, which men like McTavish and Gabriel Deschamps would reserve for their own exploitation.

Free traders like Gilroy himself were the men in charge of the brigades, shrewd merchants of Montreal who scented the fortunes that were to be made in the fur-trade of the *Pays d'en Haut* and who had financed and conducted independent expeditions at their personal risk to bring back the great prizes of pelts to the Eastern market.

Gilroy had been in the van of the fleets all the way from Montreal, but the rest were close in his wake, and here they came rocking over Superior's rollers to their bivouacs on the shore; the brigades of Richard Gray, of Robert Carnstairs, of Matthew Cheyne and of several more.

Gilroy knew them all, and he waved a great hand to them in the midst of their busy camping preparations.

"Hello, Gray! Hello, Carnstairs! Hello, Cheyne!" he greeted.

"Hello, Gilroy!" they called back. "You've landed first, eh?"

"Just at noon," Gilroy informed them.

"Have you packed your goods over the portage?" asked Cheyne.

Gilroy nodded briefly.

"What about the Rainy River route this season?" inquired Carnstairs. "Is there any word of the Pillagers abroad?"

"Yes," intimated Gilroy, "they plundered my cargo over at Fort Charlotte."

"What!" exploded Richard Gray. "At Fort Charlotte, you say? Then we do well to land together like this. Eh, comrades?"

"That we do," declared Carnstairs. "But can't we get your goods back, Gilroy? There are a lot of lusty paddlers in these independent brigades and not an owner but will lend you help."

"Aye, that we will," chorused the Montreal merchants.

"Maybe I'll need it," observed Gilroy grimly. "Thanks for your good-will, gentlemen, but I'm going up to see Gabriel Deschamps first. If I need your help, I'll call on you, you may be sure. It's best to know where we stand with him before we leave Grande Portage."

For Grande Portage was the gateway to the Western country they adventured and the open way-station for all *voyageurs* who came that way, although Gilroy was not the only free trader who had noticed the growing tendency on the part of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray to usurp it for their own use.

As the high-handed McTavish dominated the affairs of that firm in the East, so at McTavish's instigation his tool Deschamps dominated their operations in the West, posing as their official in charge of their Grande Portage depot, routeing in their trading brigades, freighting out their fur, presiding over the business conducted when the Montreal heads met the *Pays d'en Haut* heads at the half-way house on Superior's rocky shore.

Even now they were in session as Gabriel Deschamps had said at noon that they would be, planning the Summer campaign, as Gilroy came up the sand flat, through the post yard and knocked on the closed door of their assembly hall.

"Who comes now?" demanded the loud voice of Deschamps as he threw the door wide open. "Ah! You, Gilroy. But why do you come here? You are not with this house."

"No, nor should you be with this house either, Deschamps," denounced Gilroy, pushing bruskly past him over the door-sill. "You should be with your Pillagers over at Fort Charlotte where they have just plundered my cargo."

"What in the name of all the demons do you mean?" demanded Deschamps sharply.

"Why, that the Pillagers and the house of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray are one and the same firm," sneered Gilroy. "Every free trader on the waterways knows that. And seeing that your interests are joint interests, I shall draw on the house of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray here for the amount of my cargo that is gone. This is the bill of lading of the lost trade-stuff."

Gilroy laid on the table the document that went with every fleet, the list of articles the canoes contained, that was checked at Lachine, the Montreal point of loading, and rechecked every time cargo was shifted over the numerous portages on the Montreal-Grande Portage route. In the center of the table he laid it, on top of a litter of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray papers as a grim hint that it took precedence over their affairs.

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McTAVISH was not present, but the rest of the partners were there, ranged round two sides of the long table, and they stared at him in astounded silence. Deschamps' chair at the head of the table was empty, and while dead ominous quiet reigned in the assembly hall Gabriel mechanically left the door and dropped into his seat, staring like his partners at the hard-set face of Gilroy.

"You challenge us, Gilroy?" he burst out finally.

"I do more," Gilroy told him heatedly. "I demand the duplication of that cargo from you. If you don't produce trade-stuff equivalent to what you've plundered, I'll gather my men off the beach and take it out of your stores."

"Which sounds as if you threaten us, eh?" snarled Deschamps.

He glared malevolently into Gilroy's face, his black eyes a-blaze, his mustache bristling, his swarthy cheeks contorted so that the skin of them looked like wrinkled parchment, but if he hoped to intimidate Gilroy he failed in the attempt.

There were five partners of the McTavish house, and he was only one, yet, poising in the candle-light over their table to his full height of six feet and one-half, Gilroy looked a match for the five. Massive-limbed he loomed, but balanced lightly as an Ojibway dancer on his moccasined feet, his whole powerful frame set ready to meet violence if it was presented, his face looking into Deschamps' only three feet away.

Pillager and free-trader they glared, and McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray, staring at them both, suddenly realized that this immemorial issue between Montreal traders and Rainy Lale blackmailers had come to a point of settlement. Either they had to clinch their hold on the Western fur-route or this man Gilroy would break it, and the matter that troubled them was the question whether they could do it at the moment.

Most of their force was over the portage where Deschamps had sent it to reinforce his Chippewas and *coureurs des bois* in their coup of plundering Gilroy's cargo. They had few men about the post of Grande Portage, and evidently Gilroy had his full quota of three dozen packers back on the beach. He had taken them by surprize, breaking into their closed assembly hall, interrupting their session in a way they had never dreamed; and if he raided their stores as he threatened it was doubtful if they could stop him. So their shrewd Scottish minds flew instantly to bargaining. They had never been able to break Gabriel Deschamps, so they had bargained with him. Perhaps Gilroy could be eliminated in the same way.

"Well," parleyed McGill with a significant glance at his partners, "you had better put in your claim, Gilroy. We are busy tonight, but tomorrow we can consider——"

"We will consider nothing," roared Deschamps sweeping, McGill's judgment and advice aside with a violent wave of his hand. "You are not the head of this house, McGill. McTavish is the head, and I know what McTavish would say."

"You might be more cool-headed, Gabriel," grumbled Todd, "but tell us what he would say."

Deschamps turned firecely on Gilroy once more.

"McTavish would give you your answer without parley, as I give it," he bellowed. "And the answer? To the —— with you and your bill of lading."

Deschamps leaned suddenly forward and snatched at the bill of lading as if to tear it into shreds, but with a single bound Gilroy was upon him, his own hand descending on the papers, his weight thrown against Deschamps' chair and against the head of the table. The table tilted on its end, Deschamps' chair overturned, and together they went down.

But Gilroy felt in his hand the paper at which he had snatched, and he stuffed it into his pocket, as with one arm encircling Deschamps they wrenched and rolled on the floor. Above them McGillivray was on his feet trying in vain to prevent the collapse of the long table and yelling for his partner Frobisher to save the candle at the other end. Gilroy could glimpse it from where he lay, toppling in its heavy brass candle-stick and sliding swiftly down the incline of the table-top.

"Quick, Frobisher, snatch it!" appealed McGillivray. "Man, man, I might have known you would be too slow."

For the sliding candle-stick was too swift for Frobisher. It shot into the litter of papers sifting slowly from the table-top ahead of it, and a little avalanche of fire poured on the floor.

"Forty fiends!" grumbled Frobisher, stumbling in his efforts over McGillivray's toes. "If you had kept your feet, in I might have got the cursed thing. Let me stamp it out."

Gilroy had broken Deschamps' hold on him, and he pulled himself up as Frobisher jumped with both feet upon the blazing litter of papers. He smothered the fire swiftly, but the documents had been destroyed just as swiftly, and all that remained under Frobisher's heels was a tiny pile of blackened cinders.

"Look at them," Frobisher breathed. "All gone—bills of lading, fur-lists, post transfers, everything."

And as if in afterthought he added curiously, "Did you happen to seize your own bill of lading, Gilroy?"

"Yes, I have that all right," assured Gilroy, slapping the pocket into which he had stuffed

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the document his hand had fallen on when he sprang at Deschamps. "And you may be sure I'll have the filling of it, too."

"You will, eh?" stormed Deschamps, all his ferocity breaking out again as he too staggered to his feet. "See the damage you've done with your interference? Burned our documents and disorganized our business!"

He struck viciously at Gilroy, but the latter swerved suddenly and crashed his fist in Deschamps' chest, sending him back against his partners. A moment Deschamps steadied himself on the shoulders of the other four, then with one accord the five rushed at Gilroy.

"By Heavens, you go too far, Gilroy," boomed McGillivray.

"Aye, 'tis not consideration you'll get now," seconded McGill. "Rush him off his feet, men, and throw him outside."

BUT Gilroy met their rush half-way, a handy chair he had grasped poised above his head. Again and again he swung the unwieldy weapon as if it had been a walking-stick, smashing lightning-strokes on the bent heads of his bewildered opponents.

Deschamps went down and Todd and McGillivray, crashing among the upthrusting legs of the overturned table. Frobisher and McGill, shrewd enough to realize that they had met more than their match, broke for the door. Gilroy hurled the remains of his splintered chair into their ribs as they went, and as he caught up the stump of the fallen candle that still sputtered on the floor he found that Deschamps, Todd and McGillivray had crawled out of the débris of the long table and fled after their companions.

He could hear them outside, running in the direction of their store building, their voices arguing in angry accents as to the best means of protecting their goods from that madman, Gilroy. A moment Gilroy listened, a smile of grim delight on his features, and mechanically his hand fell to the bill of lading in his pocket.

He drew out the paper, but even as his eye rested on it in the candle-light he knew it was not the bill of lading he had placed upon the table in front of Deschamps. Rather he saw that it was a document of the McTavish house that his fingers had grasped by mistake in his clench with Gabriel, and with a growl of chagrin he turned it over to glimpse the writing thereon.

But as he scanned the script his growl of chagrin changed to an exclamation of wonder, for he realized that he held in his hand the blackmail list, the plunder-schedule of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray. Here in black and white were entered the names of the free traders operating out of Montreal that season and conducting brigades to the West.

Gilroy read the names of many he knew, several of whom he had greeted in the act of beaching their brigades as he came up to the McTavish post, the merchants, Matthew Cheyne, Robert Carnstairs, Richard Gray. The names were all there and the places where the Pillagers were to intercept them on their way into the West.

Thus Gilroy's own brigade, at the head of the list and first spoil of the season, was marked for attack at Fort Charlotte. Several more were scheduled to be set upon between that place and Rainy Lake. Richard Gray's was doomed at Rainy Lake, Robert Carnstairs' at Rainy River, Matthew Cheyne's at Lake of the Woods.

Still, the entry that riveted his interest most was the last entry of all, and it read:

Brigade of Gervais Langlois and Mademoiselle Isobel Langlois—Seine Post.

And underneath was the significant note:

Mademoiselle Isobel—no ransom.

Significant indeed, and significant, too, the place where the brigade was to be intercepted! It was marked for the Seine Post where the Seine River poured into Rainy Lake; the headquarters of the Pillagers, their bristling stronghold in the very heart of the dangerous Rainy River country.

Whether brigades went in to Rainy Lake by the Pigeon River route or by the Kaministiquia River route some miles to the eastward, they inevitably had to pass the Seine Post, for the Seine River, flowing down the opposite slope of the Height of Land which divided it from the Kaministiquia, debouched into Rainy Lake.

To Gilroy the choice of location was evidence that Deschamps wished to make doubly sure of stopping the Langlois brigade, and the note concerning Mademoiselle Isobel explained the eagerness of his desire. Of all the free traders Gervais Langlois was the richest and the cargoes he carried were the most precious that went from Montreal to the West.

And of all the Montreal women his daughter Isobel was the most beautiful that ever decked herself in finery from the proceeds of the fur. Many a free trader aspired to her hand. Gilroy himself had had such aspirations for three years, but for three years he never had had the means to dare to put himself on her plane, for three times without fail Deschamps had beggared him at a stroke.

Long ago he had understood that with Gabriel and himself it was more than a matter of plunder. It was a bitter rivalry, a deadly hatred that had begun over Mademoiselle Isobel herself and reached its climax when the free traders began to suspect Deschamps of alliance with the Pillagers who took toll of their fleets.

In a session of free traders in Montreal Gilroy

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openly charged Deschamps with being not only an accomplice but a secret leader of the thieves. Deschamps failed to clear himself of the charge before the meeting, and on a majority vote was voted out of the ranks of the free traders.

Gervais Langlois was one of those who supported Gilroy's charge and voted against Deschamps, and his action in the matter settled Deschamps' legal aspirations to Mademoiselle Isobel. Yet Gabriel still had illegal aspirations, and Gilroy had discovered that he proposed to fulfil them at the Seine Post.

It was a discovery that called for action. Gilroy knew that Gervais Langlois and Isobel had left Montreal with the intention of avoiding Grande Portage and going into the Rainy River country by the Kaministiquia River route. The Pillagers did not haunt the Kaministiquia as they did the Rainy and if one could slip past Seine Post by night the former waterway afforded the most safety.

Even now Isobel and her father might be nearing the Kaministiquia's mouth and he had to communicate with them before they ascended it and fell into the hands of Deschamps' lieutenants. So the moment he had scanned his way through the plunder-sheet Gilroy was out of the assembly hall and running down the Grande Portage beach. The matter of his cargo could wait, but Isobel Langlois' danger would admit of no delay. Even if he never recovered his cargo or its equivalent, its safety was as nothing compared to hers.

THE dark had crept down over the wooded Laurentian hills while he parleyed and fought with Deschamps and the rest in their post. Grande Portage bay was as black as ebony under the sulfur stars and upon the curving sands that rimmed the bay blazed the fires of the newly landed brigades. His feet striking the deeply trampled sands, Gilroy plunged for the nearest fire, that of Matthew Cheyne, and as he heard the thud of the running, Cheyne jumped up abruptly from his seat by the blaze.

"What's the matter, Gilroy?" he demanded. "Have you fallen foul of Deschamps?"

"Yes, I flattened the dog under his own table," growled Gilroy, waving the plunder-sheet dramatically in the crimson light of the fire. "But see here. This is something that takes precedence over my loss. Call the others and let them read their own names."

Instantly Gray, Carnstairs and all the other free traders ran over from their near-by bivouacs, crowding about Gilroy, staring at the schedule that he held, listening eagerly as he explained how he had come into possession of it. Exclamations of surprize, imprecations, threats broke from them as they saw their names in black and white.

"The hound!" snarled Carnstairs. "He has me marked down for Rainy River, has he? Well, I guess that, thanks to Gilroy, I'll have something to say about the place."

"And I also," nodded Gray, blackly. "Rainy Lake is just as good a place to face him as Rainy River, Robert. So I propose that we join our brigades."

"Done," accepted Carnstairs on the instant. "Anybody else willing to risk their all in the clash?"

"I'm with you," assured Matthew Cheyne. "Gabriel won't have to wait at Lake of the Woods to strike me."

"No, we'll do the striking," clamored all the rest of the free traders. "Count us in with you. If McTavish can merge forces for his own ends, why not we? Are we all here, Gilroy?"

"Two brigades are missing," announced Gilroy, carefully consulting the plunder-sheet and as carefully scanning the bronzed faces ringed round him in the firelight. "Fitzhaven, marked for attack at the Winnipeg River, isn't here, nor Langlois, marked for plunder at Seine Post. Langlois, I know, was taking the Kaministiquia route. About Fitzhaven I'm not sure."

"I am," boomed Cheyne. "He told me himself he was going to avoid Grande Portage. I spoke him at Michipicoten mending, one of his canoes."

"That's all right, then," nodded Gilroy with satisfaction. "There is no free trader unaccounted for, none to land here in our absence and be waylaid by himself. So we can turn our attention to Fitzhaven and Langlois and speed back to find them at the Kaministiquia. It's the Langlois brigade I'm most anxious about. Did you read the foot-note about Mademoiselle Isobel, men?"

In their eagerness to pick out their own names in the plunder-schedule, in their indignation at Deschamps' cold-blooded calculations for their ruin, the free traders had not noticed the note about Mademoiselle Isobel, but now they read it over Gilroy's big thumb—

"Mademoiselle Isobel—no ransom."

They read and they understood, for not a man of them but knew of the rivalry between Gilroy and Deschamps and the expulsion of Gabriel from the ranks of the free traders.

"The coward!" exclaimed Carnstairs, voicing the sentiments of all. "He takes advantage of the girl's traveling a perilous path, eh? And plans to even up with the three of you at one stroke? By the stars, Gilroy, we can't get to the Kaministiquia any too quick if we would catch Langlois there."

"No, none too quick," agreed Gilroy. "I have no stuff to load, so I'll lead off with my canoes. That will be so much gain. The rest of you can tumble in your packs and come as fast as you can. If I don't strike sound or sign

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of the Langlois brigade you'll find me waiting at the Kaministiquia's mouth."

Gilroy was off to his own camp as he spoke where Georges Landreau and the Caughnawaga canoemen awaited his orders.

"Ba gar," breathed Georges, who scented trouble as the nose of a moose scents man, "I'm guess dere's de swift work to do all right."

"Yes, launch off, Georges," commanded Gilroy briskly. "We lead the free-trade brigades back to the Kaministiquia."

"*Mon Dieu*, an' dis *diable* Gabriel Deschamps, ain't we be have de chance to settle wit' heem?"

"Aye, never worry, Georges," Gilroy laughed as he caught up a long paddle himself, "you'll see him again at the Seine Post. It's there we'll settle with him. Now, in with the birch-barks."

Swiftly the Caughnawagas caught up the long canoes and carried them down to the water's edge. Grande Portage bay nestled among the Laurentian hills like a wide crescent. A wooded island gave shelter in front and from the sand shore a long canoe-pier angled out to enclose a quiet canoe-harbor for embarking and disembarking.

On the calm surface of the still water, gleaming phospherescent at the smite of canoe-hulls and paddle-blades, the Caughnawagas launched their crafts and stepped in. As Gilroy settled himself in the leading canoe with Georges Landreau for his bowsman he glanced over his shoulder at the post of McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray.

Expecting, perhaps, that Gilroy would summon his friends to his aid and come back in an effort to rush their store and recover the equivalent of his lost goods they were in the act of barricading the doors and windows of their buildings, but as Gilroy's brigade floated off from shore and the rest of the free-trade brigades made shift to follow hastily, Gabriel Deschamps and his partners paused in their work to stare, their figures outlined blackly in the door and window-spaces against the yellow glare of candles within.

"Ah-hah, Gilroy! Craven hearts you found among your free-trade friends, eh? An odd way, that, to carry out your boast and fill your bill of lading."

"May be they're not so craven as you think, Deschamps," Gilroy called back. "As for the bill of lading I'm on my way to fill it now."

"At Montreal, perhaps," guessed Deschamps roaring with laughter that rumbled raucously over the quiet canoe-harbor. "Well, if you have a second cargo in reserve there bring it along and I'll guarantee to take it off your hands."

But Gilroy did not trouble to answer Deschamps' ridicule. In the steersman's seat of the leading canoe, two pairs of Caughnawaga middlemen between him and Georges Landreau in the bow, he was bending his huge shoulders to the paddle, swerving the long birch-bark through the channel separating the island from the mainland, shooting past the sloping, bouldered island point and out over night-bound Superior. After him streaked his five remaining craft, riding lightly, cargoless now, ballasted only with what camp duffel they had been using on Grande Portage beach. Their Indian crews drove them like great golden arrows in Gilroy's wake, and in the wake of the five came the rest of the free traders' laden canoes as rapidly as they could get them off the sands.

OUT along the north shore, in the sweep of Superior's waves the empty craft had a greater margin on the loaded ones, and Gilroy's brigade drew ahead till the brigades in the rear were dropped in the darkness of the lake. Toward dawn as he reached the Kaministiquia's mouth they were not yet in sight, nor could he discern any brigades afloat to the eastward in the direction from which the Fitzhaven and Langlois fleets should come.

"I'm afraid we're late, Georges," he brooded as he searched the rose-tinted, mist-clouded waters with anxious eyes. "We must have missed them by hours."

"Ba gar, mebbe not, for dere's fire among de trees," cried Georges, pointing to where a tiny blaze showed like a sinking star among the pines.

Gilroy stared a second and swerved his canoe in. Dusk of morning still enshrouded the bank of the Kaministiquia, but beyond the tiny blaze he could make out the upturned canoes and tents of a brigade.

"Hello!" he shouted. "Whose brigade is that?"

"Fitzhaven's from Montreal," came back the answer.

The dawn light was growing, and as the owner of the voice advanced to the water's edge Gilroy could recognize him as Fitzhaven himself, black-bearded almost to his waist, short-armed, short-legged, with a lurch to his thickset frame that reminded one of a bear on its haunches.

"Who are you?" Fitzhaven demanded. "Ah, Hugh Gilroy, is it? But what the —— are you doing here? Matthew Cheyne told me you were bound to the West by the Pigeon River route. And your canoes are empty by the way they glide. Have you met with trouble?"

"Aye, and I'm not the only one." Gilroy growled. "Trouble's stalking for a good many more, not excepting yourself, Fitzhaven. Tell me if Gervais Langlois and his daughter spoke to you on Lake Superior."

"Why, yes, I was overtaken by them last night and paddled the last ten miles of the lake-route with them," Fitzhaven informed.

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"They're camped with you?" blurted Gilroy, half-relieved.

Fitzhaven shook his head. "No, he went on last night. He thought to get through the Pillagers' country by a quick dash and as few camps as he could make. It was good counsel, and I should have gone with him only for trouble with my canoes. I had to stay and patch them. It is my second delay on Lake Superior. The first was back at Michipicoten."

"Then for Heaven's sake get them in shape as quickly as you can, Fitzhaven," implored Gilroy. "Cheyne and Gray and Carnstairs and the rest of the free traders are not far behind me. We found out Deschamps has us all marked for plunder by his Pillagers—even yourself at the Winnipeg River and Langlois at Seine Post. So we've banded to fight our way. You understand? Gervais and Isobel must be stopped before they spring Deschamps' trap. Give Cheyne and the rest the word when they come. I was to await them here, but your news changes the face of things."

Gilroy waved a paddle-blade in good-by.

"Tell them to drive like the demons in my wake, Fitzhaven," he urged. "If I catch Gervais and Isobel I'll hold their brigade till you come up. If I don't—well, I don't like to think of that, but you men must not be far away."

"Never fear, we'll be hard on your heels," Fitzhaven cheered. "I'll rush my mending through. The others should be here by sunrise."

With a foaming swirl Gilroy's canoes were gone up the Kaministiquia River, driving ceaselessly for the Height of Land. Over clear riverway, over the lakes they went to the straining sweep of the paddles, over the portages on the backs of darting Caughnawagas. All the way Gilroy keyed himself for sight, sound or sign of Langlois' passing, but as the time wore on, his hopeful spirit fell and he was plunged into a black mood. For as far as the Height of Land whence the waters flowed the other way to Lake Winnipeg he found only one long-dead camp-fire. It seemed to fill him with a fury, this mute evidence that those he sought were still tantalizingly beyond his reach, and Georges Landreau wondered at the savage frenzy with which he drove the brigade onward.

The Caughnawagas were tiring. The iron Georges was worked to a shadow himself. Yet they never wavered. Like mechanical things they did his will, like tools that would cease to perform their duty only when worn to nothing. Over the Height of Land was another of Gervais' camp-fires, cold as Gilroy's hopes, but the course of the Seine River down to Rainy Lake showed him nothing else till he came in sight of Seine Post at the mouth of the stream.

"We've lost the race, Georges," he gritted as he scanned the high palisades of the fort. "The luck of the —— goes with Gabriel Deschamps while misfortune sits with me."

"You t'ink dey're inside dose palisades?" asked Georges wearily.

"Yes, and Deschamps too. The Pigeon River route is shorter than the way we've paddled. He has had time and to spare to reach Seine Post before us, and you may be sure his Pillagers did not let Langlois' brigade slip by. Watch out! There are some of their canoes sneaking out now. They've sighted us and are looking for chance prey. Paddle back up the river."

Back up the Seine they flew out of reach of the scouting craft from Seine Post and on toward evening they met the brigades of the other free traders foaming down to join them.

"What luck, Gilroy?" roared Cheyne in the van. "Any sign of Langlois or his girl?"

"Not a sign but dead camp-fires," Gilroy told them. "I guess Deschamps and his curs have done their work. A few hours might have made a lot of difference. Now I'll have to reach them inside the palisades."

"The palisades!" echoed Fitzhaven incredulously. "Why, they are eighteen feet high, man. That is a job for a force of five hundred, while we have barely two."

"Swift surprize is as good as double strength in a fight," declared Gilroy. "I pressed as close as I could to Seine Post to make sure that Gervais and Isobel were not on the river, only to be driven back by the appearance of scouting craft from the Fort. They know there's a brigade afloat. Deschamps never yet refused the bait of a cargo, so he'll open his gates for another."

"A decoy cargo, eh?" demanded Richard Gray. "It will draw Deschamps all right, but it will not level his palisades."

"The palisades will not need to be leveled once I am inside to open the gates," observed Gilroy grimly. "Hidden under the packs I can give you a clear path if you are swift enough to take it."

"Aye, we are swift enough," nodded Carnstairs, "but it is a mighty risk, Gilroy. You take your life in your hands to worm into Seine Post alone. Suppose they discover you in the cargo."

Gilroy's grim eyes lightened as he mentally visioned Isobel Langlois, frantic, helpless, desperate, questing for some means of escape from Seine Post.

"In this country one has to take risks to achieve one's ends, Carnstairs," he spoke simply.

"But let some one accompany you," entreated Cheyne. "Let me go and lend you a hand."

"No, no," objected Gilroy, "that would only double the risk of being detected. One man

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has a good chance of lying unseen in a cargo, but surely not two. I must go along, and the rest of you must do your part when the moment comes."

HASTILY Gilroy chose his craft, picking his canoemen to paddle them from Fitzhaven's brigade for the reason that Deschamps had not as yet seen them and might be deceived the more easily into thinking them strange. There were six craft each, propelled by six men, and amidships in the leading canoe as it dropped down-stream again lay Gilroy with the packs of trade-goods strewn over him for concealment. The rest of the free traders' goods were cached on the bank that they might not hinder the canoes in action and, trailing Gilroy at a safe distance, came the fleets of Cheyne, Carnstairs, Gray, and all the others.

Gilroy's brigade had not gone far down-stream before the bowsman of the canoe in which he lay hidden gave a guttural warning.

"Canoes," he grunted unemotionally.

Gilroy, peering from between his shielding packs, made out the scouting craft he had sighted first as they issued from Seine Post. Evidently they deemed this brigade the same for which they were scouting up-river, for in a flash they were gone once more, sneaking around the river-bends in the belief that they themselves were still unseen.

"Marked down their prey, eh?" growled Gilroy to his canoemen. "And off to tell Deschamps we're close to Seine Post. Now, paddle like the wind as if you're bound to run the gauntlet of the Seine."

As men who feared a sudden blow, their paddles foaming, their eyes turned apprehensively toward the high palisades of the fortress that guarded the river-mouth, Gilroy's canoemen drove their craft on at tremendous speed, but as they reached a point opposite the water-gate, it suddenly swung open and out shot a score of canoes filled with Pillagers, Chippewas, *coureurs des bois*.

Gilroy, still daring to peer from his concealment in the leading craft of the decoy brigade, recognized Deschamps himself in the onrushing fleet. Standing up in his plunging craft, surrounded by his lieutenants, Gabriel was swinging his arms in wild gestures and uttering explosive commands.

"Across to the right bank; now to the left," he was directing his crews in the blockade of the stream. "A double line in the center. There—*par Dieu*, they will not pass now."

From bank to bank the fleet of the Pillagers held the waterway. The decoy brigade under Gilroy's whispered commands swerved uncertainly from one shore to the other. Close to the right bank they hung as if in the forlorn hope of boring through. Then at Gilroy's word the canoemen sprang erect, seemingly in panic, abandoning their cargo, leaping to the bank and fleeing afoot back up the Seine.

"Ah-hah!" exulted Deschamps. "Easy plunder—got without a blow. Tow in the canoes."

Swiftly the Pillagers threw loops of rope about the scrolled bows of the abandoned canoes and, some paddling, some hauling their spoil astern, they pointed slowly for the water-gate of Seine Post. According to custom it had closed after the exit of the pillaging fleet, but now it opened abruptly at their coming, and, laughing and singing, Deschamps' crews drove through. The gate clanged shut after them, and Gilroy, lying frozen under his packs, drew breath with a thrill as he heard Deschamps address some one in the yard.

"Not a bad day's spoil, eh?" he heard Gabriel chuckle. "Two brigades at a stroke. This unidentified one and your own, Mademoiselle Isobel. Come and see the cargo unloaded. There is all sorts of finery here, silks, beads and ribbons. I think I shall make you a wedding present of it all."

Gilroy could hear the girl refusing in stifled, passionate tones, could hear a laughing and scuffling on Gabriel's part as if he were dragging her forcibly to the edge of the little canoe-harbor that the palisade enclosed. Instinctively he started to rise to her aid, so that the packs above him quivered, then he curbed himself for the instant and stiffened motionless where he lay.

He could not let his feelings riot and in one impulsive moment spoil everything. There was the water-gate to fling open, and Cheyne, Carnstairs, Gray and the rest must be given a little more time to swing down the Seine. Luckily the craft in which he was concealed had been hauled in behind the others. While the Pillagers under Deschamps' direction caught up the packs from one canoe after another and carried them off to the store, he waited grimly, tensely, ready to spring.

"Hurry up, you laggards," yelled Deschamps to the packers in the store. "The last freight is the best of all and fit finery for a bride."

He laid a covetous hand on the bales in the canoe, but the bales rose abruptly under his touch as if alive and a great muscled figure hurled itself upon him.

"The ——!" roared Deschamps, grappling blindly as if with an apparition. "What in —— have I summoned now?"

"Hugh—Hugh Gilroy," cried Isobel Langlois in an hysterical voice.

She was trembling from shock, her great blue eyes filled with a wonder that was almost awe, her delicate face painted with the sudden flame of hope. Deschamps had her by the arm as he took the devilish delight of showing her her wedding finery, but Gilroy struck his hold

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away with a terrific blow. He heard the snap of the bone in Deschamps' arm as he struck. Gabriel clapped palm to it with an exclamation of pain, and Gilroy with a second blow stretched him half-dazed upon the ground.

"A decoy brigade," groaned Deschamps, rolling on the ground and feebly attempting to rise. "Quick, *camarades*, quick!"

"Aye, quick it is," echoed Gilroy. "To the water-gate, Isobel."

"But my father, Hugh," she implored. "My father's held in the post by Deschamps."

"We'll free him in a moment," Gilroy assured her as he pulled the bar from the water-gate.

Deschamps' keeper of the gate who, poised on its top, acted as both guard and sentinel, leaped down to stop him but Gilroy felled him with a single blow, pulled the bar from the water-gate and swung it wide open.

"All the rest of the free-trade brigades are right at hand. Ha! yonder they are," he exulted. "Come on Cheyne, come on all. Drive right through."

FROM the screen of the trees at the nearest bend the free traders had watched the success of Gilroy's manœuver with his decoy brigade. They had seen it disappear within the palisades, and noted the watchful sentinel disappear from the gate-top. Then they had caught up the crews that abandoned it and speeded down as Gilroy had directed. Now shooting down the mid-current, all their fleets massed together, they swung for the gap of the water-gate at Gilroy's signal.

Gabriel Deschamps, staggering at last to his feet on the edge of the canoe-harbor, saw them coming, nearly two hundred free traders burning to pay off old scores, but he did not stop to feel their might. His palisades breached by Gilroy's ruse, his harbor filling with revengeful fleets, he fled up the post yard, calling for his men to run.

"Into the forest," he yelled. "Save yourselves. Seine Post is gone."

As active as any in spite of his broken arm he was up on the firing-steps and over the palisade at the rear of the post with his fleeing Pillagers. Cheyne, Carnstairs, Gray and Fitzhaven at the head of the free-trade canoemen were hard on their heels. Gilroy, watching with Isobel from the water-gate, could glimpse them toppling the last of the Pillagers from the firing-steps or smiting them off the tops of the palisades to the ground eighteen feet below.

"Seine Post is a free-trade post now, Isobel," he sighed with the relief of a man who has been for hours under strain. "Let us go into it, free your father and take back our own. I've a bill of lading to fill as well as you."

"Deschamps plundered you, too, Hugh?" she asked amazed.

"Yes, at Fort Charlotte," he told her, "and when I went into his Grande Portage depot to settle with him this is what I found."

He slipped into her tapering, girlish hands the plunder-sheet he had carried out of the McTavish, McGill, Frobisher, Todd and McGillivray assembly hall and pointed to her name.

"Such plunder as that is not to be lightly given up, Isobel," he ventured closing his great hands over the tapering ones that held the sheet. "And in capture or recapture the possession-clause still holds."

Gilroy felt her hands tremble. The color of the wild rose sprayed her transparent skin, flushing it sheer to the waves of her brown hair. Her breath came quickly in passionate throbs as when he had heard her struggling with Deschamps on the edge of the canoe-harbor.

"Clause? What clause, Hugh?" she faltered tenderly, with averted eyes that had read it well enough.

"No ransom," Gilroy breathed.

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His Word of Honor

by E S Pladwell

Author of "The Sea Lawyer," etc.

THE stout, talkative owner of Albert Schilling's grocery store and roadhouse, situated at the turn of a lonely desert highway, pointed to a coterie of nondescripts near his hot stove and lowered his voice discreetly.

"There's the finest little pair that ever shot up an orphan asylum or wrecked a train," he observed to his visitor, the superintendent of the railroad. "They've got into the habit of curling around my stove these days. I don't blame 'em much at that. It's mean weather—drizzle and blow, drizzle and blow, all day long!"

The superintendent scrutinized the collection playing cards near the stove.

"They look familiar," he observed. "Who are they?"

"That one-eyed old buzzard with the Santa Claus whiskers is 'Bull' Judson, who used to hold up your pet train every week regular. He used to be about the toughest hellion that ever carried a six-shooter, but he's getting old now so they let him ramble around as he pleases. He's on his way to Gila City. He breezes down to town every few months to let the folks know he's still on the map. He's sort of a town pet—the last of the old Arizona bad men."

"I've met him," nodded the superintendent. "Who's that old Indian with the underslung jaw and the checked shirt who is standing over there?"

"That's Henry Harris. He was one of Geronimo's little playmates in the days when they used to catch settlers and burn 'em alive in their homes.

"When Geronimo was rounded up he got away and kept at it till the cavalry caught him and his gang in the hills up north of here. After that he promised to be good."

"Was he?"

"Oh, so-so. He just got out of jail for killing another Injun, but that's different. Otherwise there hasn't been any trouble."

"I think I read about it in the papers."

"Probably. The other Injun was found dead on Henry Harris's property, so the jury couldn't dope out whether it was murder or trespass or what. There were bullet-holes all over the place and it might have meant a battle to the finish, but nobody'll ever find out. All Harris did on the witness stand was grunt. Not a word out of him."

The owner of the store lowered his voice still more.

"Say, here's a peculiar thing," he confided. "There's twenty thousand dollars in that safe right alongside them, including what you just gave me for the section-hand supplies, and yet they don't even look at the safe. It shows what time will do. If this was thirty-five years ago I'd have lasted just two minutes."

"Well, things are better as they are," decided the superintendent. "That sort of thing is done away with. Who are those other three men with them?"

"A puncher out of a job, a section-hand, and a plain hobo that blew in on two-forty-three this afternoon."

"Do you do much business with your roadhouse?"

"Oh, not so much since Arizona went dry, of course, but still we get a few auto parties. There's one in the dance-room now."

And he pointed through an open door beyond the crowded shelves of the grocery store to where some people were gathered.

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Something cold and hard insinuated itself in the back of Schilling's neck.

"Don't move," came a throaty bass whisper behind him. "Put your hands up."

Schilling felt a sickening paralysis of all his senses. His hair seemed to crinkle and his stomach felt gone; but when he groped back to semiconsciousness he noted that his arms were safely in the air. So were the superintendent's. Some one behind them held pistol-muzzles to their necks relentlessly.

Two men suddenly walked between them—middle-sized persons in overalls, booted and spurred, with cheap red bandanna handkerchiefs masking their faces and wary eyes glinting from holes in the cloth. Both men held heavy six-shooters.

"Hand's up," they roared to the card-players.

Three of the gamesters fairly leaped to hold their arms ceilingward. The old Indian glowered and arose slowly, elevating his bronzed paws as if in protest. Old Judson half-arose but held his hands on the table.

There was something amazed and outraged in the old bandit's expression. He appeared horrified—scandalized. He had engineered holdups by the dozen; and now in his old age these impudent young upstarts had the presumption to hold him up! He stood and hesitated, waiting for the next play, ready on the instant to reach for those deadly forty-fives he always kept at his hips.

Two ready pistol-muzzles pointed directly at him.

"Up!" snapped an impatient voice.

The old wolf obeyed. He recognized a tone that meant business.

The masterful robber went behind the table, giving first attention to Judson. He stopped behind the old reprobate, tore off his guns and cartridge-belt, and handed the outfit to an accomplice. The robber did not note that there were fourteen notches in those ancient pistols. He was too busy.

Judson cleared his throat.

"Leave them guns so I can find 'em later on," he requested mildly. "Them guns has been with me forty years. I don't want to lose 'em."

"I'll do what I —— please with them," roared the masterful voice.

Judson choked and his face reddened.

"Mebbe you'd better follow my play," he rumbled softly.

"You shut up!"

The old villain's bilious gray eye stared belligerently and his face turned purple-red, but he said nothing more. The masterful one went on searching for weapons, getting only pocket-knives. At length he seemed satisfied.

Meantime one of his two accomplices had herded the auto-party into the room while the other robber kept guard. Old Judson and his fellow victims soon found themselves lined up along the grocery-store counter, with a trembling débutante on one side of the old wolf and a white-faced clerk on the other.

"Now," announced the masterful one, pointing a gun muzzle toward Schilling, "come over here and open that safe."

"But——"

"Open!"

The stout storekeeper obeyed. The door of the little safe swung wide. The masterful robber plunged his hand into a compartment and drew out a packet of bills, cramming them into his pockets and repeating until the safe was cleaned. Then he turned around.

"Now we'll go after the small change," he announced. "You!"

He pointed at old Judson.

"Let's see what Santy Claus has for us. Stand out."

The belligerent Judson stepped forward, seething with indignation and waiting for the slightest misplay to give him a chance to be armed again; but none came. They took a lot of odds and ends out of his pocket and forty dollars in cash.

"Two-bit road-agents!" he muttered with professional scorn for such small-time performances.

"That's enough from you. We grab it while we can get it," rasped the masterful one, looking up from the girl, who yielded seven dollars and a bracelet.

Judson choked down some vituperation and watched him go through the rest. The old Apache, however, gave trouble. The robber got his money, his pocket-knife, a fountain pen, two butter rolls, a piece of chocolate, a watch, a cut of chewing-tobacco, a safety razor and a bottle of patent medicine containing nineteen per cent alcohol; but when he touched a shiny trick cigar-lighter the Indian grasped his wrist.

"Leggo!" snarled the old Apache.

The robber rapped the heavy steel gun-muzzle across his knuckles, then slapped him across the mouth with it. The old buck grunted and stood impassive, glaring cold malice from pin-point eyes. The robber took the cigar-lighter.

"Anybody else wanna start something?" invited the masterful robber, going into another pocket.

"Not yet," retorted old Judson grimly.

"All right."

The leader beckoned the other two holdup men toward him.

"About ready to go," he announced. "Make for the door."

Then he turned to the victims.

"If any one pokes his head outside this building for five minutes I'll shoot him down. If you don't believe me, try it."

An instant later he had vanished.

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WITH a yell Storekeeper Schilling rushed to the telephone. Four strong men started to comfort the sobbing débutante. The railroad superintendent started swearing, walking around in a distracted circle.

The old Apache sneaked to a window and peered out cautiously. The hobo slumped on the counter and absent-mindedly abstracted a pound of tobacco. Old Bull Judson made straight for the front door.

"Stop," shouted the superintendent. "Don't take any chances."

"I want my guns," roared the old frontiersman. "Durn it, I've worn 'em forty years. I'll find them road-agents if I have to ride through —— for it!"

"The telephone line's been cut," shrieked Storekeeper Schilling. "And Gila City's thirteen miles away!"

Two shots came from outside.

Judson kept struggling to get to the door. The superintendent tried desperately to block him.

"And I've just lost twenty thousand dollars," gibbered Storekeeper Schilling.

Old Judson got to the door.

"You're crazy," howled the superintendent.

"I want my guns," roared the old villain. "Heh—them fellers ain't goin' to stop and watch us. They're hittin' for home."

The old bandit was talking from experience.

"But—you're not armed."

"That's right. I forgot. Here—Schilling—gimme a gun. Git a gun for Henry Harris, too."

The wabbly Schilling finally managed to produce two shiny pistols of a type made for quick sales at extremely modest prices, with cartridges to match. Judson grabbed his, but the Indian signified blunt refusal.

"Heh!" snarled the old reprobate. "I don't blame you. Here—gimme it. Mebbe I can throw it at 'em, anyhow."

In two strides he was at the door. In another second he had started popping away at a fast-moving automobile whose occupants ignored it. The crowd in the store, cringing when the first shots were fired, soon gained in morale and rushed outside.

"Get to your auto—quick," yelled the superintendent to one of the joy-ride party. "There's a telegraph station over at the railroad. It's only two miles. Come on! Send word to the sheriff."

The crowd ran to the machine. Then they stopped.

"Two bullets through the gas-tank," groaned the autoist.

"Are there any horses?" pleaded the superintendent.

"Not a one," croaked Schilling. "My team's out delivering groceries to the ranches."

"All right. I'll walk. We've got to get action."

The superintendent started across-lots.

Meantime the old Apache had sidled up to Judson, who reloaded his blackened revolvers and turned around. The old Indian's face registered quiet resolve.

"We go get 'em," announced Harris, pointing to the far-away auto.

"Hey! How you goin' to do it?" demanded Judson.

"We follow 'em."

The old frontiersman's single eye skewered thoughtfully. He realized what the proposition meant, auto or no auto. It meant a slow, painful pursuit that might take them over mountains and valleys and gullies and waterless plains for days and weeks world without end until the Apache had found his quarry and received satisfaction.

Judson understood what was the matter with the old Indian. Besides being slapped in the face he had been deprived of that cigar-lighter. It was apparently a trophy of enormous sentimental value.

"Heh!" remarked Judson. "You must have taken the durned thing from the Injun you shot."

A quick, suspicious glance from the Apache told Judson he had hit the mark. The old frontiersman tactfully changed the subject.

"How are we goin' to tackle that gang if we do find 'em? We ain't got no guns."

"I dunno. We catch 'em some way. Mebbe sheriff come along some time. We find robbers, sheriff shoot em!"

"Well, do you think you can trail that automobile all the way? There's lots of other tracks on the road."

The Indian pointed downward.

"Left hind wheel leave marks," he replied, showing the print of a well-known tire. "Tracks all new. Bimeby get old. We trail now."

"All right; I'll go. Durn it, I've got to git them guns of mine. I seen that durned crook put 'em into his automobile. Wait till I git some grub and a canteen—I'll be back in a minute."

And soon the two vengeful old rascals, only partially aware of the speed and endurance of a modern automobile started afoot on the trail of a non-skid tire.

The superintendent meanwhile hiked across-lots as fast as he could, finally reaching the ramshackle little desert waystation and brushing aside the startled agent. In two minutes he was talking over the telephone to Sheriff Burke at Gila City. The sheriff's news was alarming.

"Don't take any chances with that gang. Lay low till we get there. Those are the three fellows who broke out of the Gila County penitentiary last night. They're tough characters—desperate men."

"How soon can you come?" demanded the superintendent.

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"I'll gather a posse in fifteen minutes. The whole city's excited over the jail-break. Gimme a train of flats and box-cars and I'll send my horses on 'em. I'll start the autos ahead right away."

THE necessary arrangements were soon made, and thus it was that before Judson and the Indian had hiked eight miles along the half-obliterated trail called a road two automobiles full of armed men rushed up to them.

"We seen you on the sky-line," announced a deputy. "Sure you're on the trail?"

Judson pointed laconically to the auto-track.

"All right; jump in."

"No," countermanded the old Apache. "Automobile too fast to see tracks."

"Oh, we don't need a microscope. Come—on—get in."

"Automobile too fast."

"Well, we ain't goin' to argue all day. Get in? No? So-long!"

A half-hour later the sheriff and eight men rode up, leading extra horses. All were equipped for a campaign, with rifles and pistols sticking all over them. The two old relics expressed a willingness to join forces.

"All right," said the sheriff. "We brought an Apache trailer along, but the more the merrier."

The old Apache looked up toward a natty young buck with a red necktie and semi-business clothes, riding a pinto pony. Old Henry Harris grunted scornfully.

"Trailer? Him? Bunk. Billiard-hall Injun. Cigar-store Injun. Shoots craps, chases chickens. No good."

"Oh, go soak your head," responded the younger aborigine tolerantly. "You better go home—it's liable to rain."

"Here—stop that," snapped the sheriff. "Give these extra horses to Judson and Harris. Give 'em guns. I never thought Bull Judson would ever join a posse, but anything's liable to happen these days. Let's go."

An obliging deputy passed a six-shooter to Henry Harris. The old Apache nodded a negative and refused it. Old Judson looked startled.

"What?" he roared in amazement. "Why—what in tarnation's the matter? Ain't the gun any good?"

"I don't want it."

Had Niagara Falls descended upon the bone-dry desert Judson would not have been more surprized. He thought he knew Indians, but this was a new one on him. It didn't belong in the catalog.

"Why—how—what's the ——'s the matter with you?" he quavered confusedly. "What in tarnation's got into you?"

"I don't want it."

Judson's jaw drooped. Then it clamped together with a snap.

"Here," he thundered, drawing up to the other. "Stop it. Take that gun. You hear me? Consarn ye, this ain't no time to cut any of your durned didoes. You take that gun!"

The violent old battler meant it. The old buck finally gave Judson a sour look and accepted the six-shooter ungraciously.

"If you don't want to play out this game, go back," said Judson quietly. "You started this. Now finish it or git out."

"Oh, I trail 'em," retorted the Indian resentfully. "I trail 'em to the end. Never mind me. I stay."

Looking puzzled, Judson took station with the sheriff and shook his head.

"Durned if I can figger it out," he mumbled. "Of all the fool propositions— That blamed old rapscallion's got some idee in his ornery head, but I can't figger it. He ain't skeered of a gun, that's sure. I guess mebbe he's jest sufferin' from plain Injun low-downishness."

"It's a queer place to pull any temperamental stunts," opined the sheriff. "Well, never mind. Come on—we're losing time."

Ten minutes later, with old Judson still mumbling, they came to an old, deserted ranch-house with sage-brush encroaching on what was once a cultivated front yard. The auto-tracks kept on past it, but there were fresh cross-tracks made by horses, apparently seven of them. The autos, pursuers and pursued, were headed south. The horses had traveled west.

The young Indian gave it only a glance. The old Apache examined the tracks but kept silent.

Four miles farther on they came to a half-abandoned railroad freight-platform with warped boards out of alinement or half-gone through age. It was still in occasional use as wisps of fresh hay, wheel-tracks, footprints and bits of rubbish testified. The boards were dry. The rain had not struck the territory.

Old Henry Harris got off his animal and snooped around the edges of the platform. The other Indian stayed by his horse.

"Well, what's the matter?" he demanded. "Do you think that gang's hiding around here? Come on. We're losing time."

"Our machines are up ahead," reminded the sheriff.

"Sure. All the machines flew past here like lightning. You can see the tracks. Nobody slowed down for anything.

Old Henry Harris kept pottering around the station.

"Horses came from the east," he announced finally. "Seven. Men from horses go into machine. Men from machine go on horses. Go west."

"Bunk," snorted the younger scout.

"They change on the platform," insisted the old buck. "They try not leave tracks."

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The young aborigine descended from his horse.

"Lemme see," he demanded. "Show me."

The old buck gave a sarcastic grunt.

"You good tracker. You see for yourself."

The younger one peered about for some time.

"Sure," he conceded. "There's been people here, but they didn't have nothin' to do with them fellows in the auto. They walked around and then went back to their horses. Maybe they shipped hay on that train that went by some time ago."

The old Apache held up his hand austerely.

"Robbers go away on horses," he ruled.

The sheriff was in a quandary. He had selected the younger tracker; the other had been wished on him; and now the authorities were conflicting. The sheriff distrusted temperamental guides and naturally favored his own choice, but he wanted to take no chances. He turned to Henry Harris.

"Is this some more monkey business or is it straight goods?" he demanded.

"Robbers go away on horses."

"Judson," demanded the sheriff, "what's the answer?"

"Oh, I guess this old Apache's talkin' straight enough. Them robbers made him durned sore. I dunno what started his other tantrum, but I'm willin' to bet he's on the right trail anyhow."

"You mean these robbers had friends who met 'em here and swapped transportation? Huh! That sounds too elaborate for a bunch of jail-birds. I doubt if they have the brains—and yet there's a possibility."

"Bunk," snorted the younger Indian. "This old buck's getted cross-eyed. He's seein' things."

Old Judson horned in.

"Heh—any time a durned young no-'count cheap sport Injun knows more about trackin' than an old-time Apache I'll jine the Salvation Army."

"Cut that out," snapped the worried sheriff. "You may be right, but I hired this young fellow because I believed he knew his business. I'll stand by him until he proves otherwise. On the other hand there's the chance that your old Apache may have the goods. I think I'll divide my force."

His gaze dwelt thoughtfully upon the most felonious old gun-fighter in Arizona.

"Judson, you know this country. Go with these three fellows here and follow the old Indian. That's five men. I'll stay with my own trailer. You go west and I'll go south. Hold up your right hand!"

The wondering Judson obeyed, and before he knew it the sheriff had mumbled a rigamarole that swore him in as a deputy sheriff of Gila County, authorized to war against the enemies of the law and equipped with authority to shoot them whenever necessary.

THUS, somewhat dazed by this offhand elevation to official glory and wondering whether the fleeing autoists or the horse party had his pistols the old bandit took charge of the little party and soon a broad vista of sage-brush, greasewood and rolling plains cut him from view of the sheriff.

Riding along the monotonous trail that seemed to lead toward a sky-line that never came nearer, the old sinner wondered at the cards dealt by Fate. He, the sin-soaked malefactor chased by posses for months and years, was now a bloodhound of the law, consecrated to the task of tracking down certain holdup persons whose evil deeds by comparison were almost amateurish. And yet the white-whiskered villain had to recover those ancient six-shooters!

A thought came to him. He turned to Henry Harris.

"What in tarnation got into you back there?" he questioned. "Heh, you'd be a fine man-hunter without a gun! What was the big idee?"

"Oh, lemme alone," grunted the surly Henry Harris, drawing into his shell of reserve.

Judson, knowing that the Indian felt embarrassed and therefore resentful, deferred further questions and they rode on in silence. Finally the sun set beyond glowering clouds. Dusk came with chill winds. The Apache called a halt.

"No good," he announced. "Too dark to see trail."

They camped in a dry wash and took to horses at the first dim light from the rising sun. As the miles passed the trail of the fleeing robbers became vague in spots, especially when they rode up a dry river-bed crammed with loose stones.

"Heh!" commented Judson. "Them fellers know their business better'n I thought."

The posse crossed a hacked-up range of hills, a desolate plain and a dismal forest of yucca-palms, ascending a narrow gorge that slashed through a range of mountains. The old buck Indian mounted a hill to reconnoiter, gaining nothing. The other joined him.

"They had extry mounts and they're ridin' fast," commented Judson. "Anyhow they've swung north. I see the telygraph poles of the railroad."

A deputy became dubious.

"After all, how do you know this ain't an innocent outfit?" he inquired.

"They're travelin' too durned fast to be innocent."

"Well, suppose they're not the same ones we're after?"

"Heh! Somebody's after 'em, that's certain. If they ain't our holdup men they're somebody else's holdup men, so there'll be no damage done if we do shoot 'em up. Besides I'm bankin' on this here old Injun in spite of his monkeyshines."

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The little posse kept on. They crossed the railroad track with the trail of the fleeing horses still headed north, and kept on for many weary miles. At dusk they camped in a deep gulch, where two saddle-sore deputies began to be querulous.

"Heh!" snorted Judson. "It'll end soon."

"How do you make that out?"

"Why, unless them-fellers have seen us they'll figger they've put the sheriff off the trail, so they'll travel slower. Mebbe tomorrow we'll catch up with 'em."

But it was not so easy. Next morning the little posse traversed a broad valley doggedly, seeing nothing of interest. Toward noon they came to a long mesa that jutted out of the valley like some chocolate-brown fortification.

The two deputies seemed relieved. They rode on dutifully for a half-mile, however, and then stopped.

"Well, here's the end for us," announced one of them.

"Heh? The end?"

Judson's bilious gray eye gave them a look that scorched.

"What's the matter? Gittin' tired?"

"Oh, no; this is the county line."

"Well, what in blazes do I care?"

"Yes—but this is as far as a Gila County deputy can go. We've got no authority in Yipaho County a-tall. If we go over the line we're liable to get into trouble."

The deputy was badly chafed by the saddle and his knowledge of the law was hazy, so he felt justified in stretching a legal point and taking the easiest way.

"Yeh. You're likely to meet some road-agents."

"Oh—you don't understand. The sheriff of Yipaho's a jealous sort of a bird and he's likely to get sore if we go into his territory. We haven't any legal right. The law doesn't allow us—see?"

The old bandit's stern face skewered.

"You mean the law don't allow you to git them fellers that broke the law?"

"Well, that's about the size of it."

The old malefactor had never owned much respect for the law in all his sixty-three years, but now his esteem for that sacred institution lowered into abysmal depths.

"The law!" he thundered. "The law!"

With a wave of his angry arm he consigned it to everlasting perdition.

"You git back to Gila and take your —— law with you. Git out of here. Go back to your sody-fountains and stick your —— law down your necks. Git! Vamose! I'm goin' ahead."

And he turned his horse toward the north impatiently.

The third deputy, a quiet, mustached, leather-faced man, rode up to Judson.

"I'll keep on," he announced quietly. "I want to look into this. Bert Schilling's my uncle and they cleaned him out. I'll follow your play."

JUDSON nodded with grim satisfaction and plodded along while the two flouted guardians of the law wrathfully took the trail for home. The Indian, the bandit and the deputy crossed the county line, traveling ten miles into a country of rolling hills covered with sage and halting at length when the old Apache left them to ascend a knoll. He returned with news.

"I see 'em," he announced. "Three-four miles ahead."

Judson and the deputy clambered up the hill and also took a look. Far in the distance, half-obscured by the cloudy haze, the tiny figures of horses and men were passing over a curved hillock, soon descending into a gully beyond it.

"Heh! I guess we've got 'em now," chortled the old villain.

"Yes; but who have we got?" questioned the deputy.

"The robbers!" snarled the Indian vehemently, turning a belligerent front to the deputy. "I bring you to robbers—see? You think I lie? You think I give you bunk? Why? Why? Why? They hit me—they take my money—everything! Now you think I let 'em go away? Heh, you find out! Go to ——!"

"Oh, I guess we're on the right trail all right," said Judson. "I don't doubt it for a minute. Pretty soon we'll prove it. Them fellers have slowed down."

"Lay low," grunted the Indian.

"What for?" demanded the deputy.

"Let 'em camp. We just passed water-hole. Next water-hole Mustang Springs, thirty-forty mile away. They camp tonight in dry gulch mebbe. Tomorrow we keep 'em away from water-holes. Bimeby they got to come to us."

"Yes—provided we can ride rings around 'em."

"One man at water-hole can keep away whole crowd. We go to water-holes mebbe. Mebbe one man go ahead tonight."

"You got more brains than you look," grunted Judson. "I guess we'll unsaddle these here hosses and follow your play."

He had learned through bitter experience never to throw away an advantage of any sort—and this looked like an advantage worth grabbing.

They made themselves comfortable under a small mountain, occasionally going up the hill to reconnoiter. They knew their quarry could not travel far in this crisscross country; in fact, the distant caravan appeared to be taking it easy. By all sane calculation the robbers should have thrown a posse off the track long ago—if they were the robbers.

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At dusk the pursuers resaddled horses and pushed on toward the north. Soon the land about them was pitch black. They stumbled onward, held together by the sound of horses and the faint creak of saddle-leather, till it seemed as if an eternity had passed. It was almost midnight when the Indian hissed and they halted.

"We pretty near there," announced the Apache. "You stay here.

The deputy registered caution.

"Maybe we'd better stick together," he suggested. "It's a mighty poor place to get separated. There's only three of us, and the other fellows are at least that many and maybe more. I'm not so sure we're near 'em anyhow. We may have strayed all over creation."

The night had been utterly starless.

The Indian did not deign to reply. He grabbed the deputy's arm and led him up a steep hillside to the top. Ahead of them, somewhere in the darkness within a mile, the faint reflection of a fire glowered under the lee of a dark hill—a vague, ghostly tinge that hardly broke the majestic blackness of the desert.

"You stay here," repeated the Indian. "I go ahead."

The deputy got another idea.

"What for? Why can't we all go? Here—if them fellows have curled up in a hollow, why not surprise 'em and catch 'em tonight?"

The deputy had never been a bandit. Judson had. He grunted disdainfully.

"Heh—do you suppose them fellers are curlin' alongside that fire? Not by a jugful. They're layin out in the brush. If you want to stumble over some ornery road-agent while you're makin' for that fire, go ahead."

After that silence reigned—an interminable silence that Judson used by going to sleep. So did the deputy. At length, just before the gray haze arrived, the old frontiersman sensed that some one was near him and woke up. It was the Indian.

"I fix 'em," remarked Henry Harris with satisfaction.

"How?"

"No more horses."

Judson sat up.

"What? You mean you've finished their hosses? Well, I'll be durned! How did you do it?"

"Knife."

Judson realized what the feat meant—a stealthy approach on wary enemies, a silent attack on nervous horses and a quick, deadly thrust at each animal with no mistakes allowed. It looked almost impossible, yet it had been done.

"I didn't know you had it in you," muttered old Judson. The deputy, however, was not so complimentary.

"It's a good piece of work," he allowed, "unless we've struck the wrong party."

The Indian ignored it.

"We stay here now?" he asked Judson.

"We'll stay near your hosses. We'll take no chances."

The canny old frontiersman realized his advantage to the full. With the enemy's transportation gone and water miles away it was now only a matter of keeping them blocked from the water-holes. The posse could now ride rings around them.

DAWN came. Somebody yelled up ahead. Soon three excitable figures appeared on a hillock, waving angry arms. Judson and his party watched it all from a clump of mesquite on an elevation and tried to recognize the figures.

"It looks like 'em, all right," muttered Judson.

"Can you prove it?" demanded the deputy.

"Heh—there's three of 'em, all in blue overalls. They've got the same hats and the same ornery dispositions. They rode like they was tryin' to git away from somebody. We trailed 'em from Schilling's Corners. What more do you want? Mebbe you're expectin' 'em to mail you business cards."

"Well, we'd better go slow," advised the careful deputy. "I believe you're right—but if a mistake's made, remember, I'm in the wrong county, where I don't belong."

"Heh! I thought you was so durned anxious to catch 'em."

"I am; only I want to make sure we've got the right ones."

Judson turned to the Indian impatiently.

"This feller's too durned particular. I guess you and me'll have to do the work. Grab your gun and git busy."

"I won't shoot."

Judson took a step backward. The old sinner was flabbergasted.

"What?"

"I won't shoot."

"What?" he yelled. "Both of you holdin' back? Durn you, what in thunder's got into you?"

He took a long, agonized breath.

"What's got into everybody?" he roared. "Are you all plumb crazy—or am I? Why—what's the big idee?"

The Indian pointed to the vague outlines of a mountain that loomed pearl-gray in the distant haze.

"You see that hill?" he asked.

"Yes, I see that hill. What's that got to do with it?"

The Indian maintained his stoical calmness, speaking in a singsong voice without intonation.

"Long time ago Apaches hide there. Geronimo gone, everybody gone except thirty-forty Injuns. Pretty soon we fight Uncle Sam sojers."

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"Well, what do I care?"

"Bimeby Uncle Sam sojers climb hill. We go to jail. Stay three-four years. Bimeby Uncle Sam sojer boss come talk. Tell Apache go home. Tell 'em promise never shoot white man again. Bimeby I promise."

The Indian concluded with hopeless finality. Judson could only stare, more in anger than in sorrow.

"Why—durn it—you mean you'll set there like a wooden Injun jest because of some fool thing that happened forty years ago?"

"I give my promise."

"Yes—but—why, you ornery half-witted son of a Piute, it wasn't meant that way. Can't you see the difference?"

"I give my promise."

"Ye-e-e-e-e-e-e!" howled Judson. "You —— —— —— low-down, garbage-eatin', good-for-nothin' son of a coyote, what in —— did you come for?"

"I track 'em for you."

The Indian ignored the insults.

"Heh! Then I'm supposed to shoot up them fellers while you lay around and do nothin'. So that's the idee, is it?"

"I keep my promise."

The old bandit came to the verge of a oplexy. His one eye blazed, his fists clenched, and his white whiskers bristled outward with the electricity of his wrath.

"You do, heh?" he roared. "Well, then you'll keep it somewheres else. Git out of here—git before I bust that ornery head of yours. Go back to Gila County on the trail you came. Go to Gila or go to ——. Wait!"

Judson suddenly had a better idea.

"Go back to the sheriff. Tell him where I am. Tell him our trail. Tell him to bring his gang up to the Gila County line! Durn you, I'll make you useful for once in your ornery life. Now, git!"

Hastened by a blasphemous farewell, the sullen, resentful old Apache turned away, sought his horse, mounted and started on the back trail. Judson watched him sourly until he had passed beyond the crest of a ridge.

"This here posse's thinin' out!" grunted the caustic old bandit as he turned to the deputy.

"I suppose you'll leave, too. Which way do you go?"

The deputy grinned. He had a gambling instinct and a sense of humor. The latter had been given something to feed on lately.

"Oh, I'll take a chance. It can't be any worse than what we've had. Lead on. When does the trouble begin?"

"Heh! There ain't goin' to be no trouble. The progrum's changed. This ain't goin' to be a battle. It'll be a roundup."

"As how?"

"Well, you dog-goned officers are too durned keerful not to catch anybody in Yipaho, so I'm goin' to send your robbers back into Gila."

"As how?"

"Ride ahead of 'em and block 'em from the water-holes up north. That'll make 'em go back."

"I see. Then they'll be surrounded by the sheriff—if the Indian makes good."

"He'll make good—durn him! The rest of it's up to you fellers."

Judson became belligerent again.

"I'm tired of this here rigamarole. I'm a citizen of Ameriky and you dog-goned officers has got to git my property back. Put up your own durned hides to the bullets. That's what you're hired for. I'll drive them fellers back to Gila and that's all—see?"

JUDSON kept his word. Riding far to the northward, he and the deputy put in an exciting afternoon blocking the progress of the robbers, posting themselves behind rocks on hillsides and firing a few shots when necessary. The angry though helpless robbers, apparently refusing to surrender even in their extremity, finally grew tired of risking bullets that whizzed among them from the gaunt, mysterious hillsides to the northward, and started legging it in the other direction.

That was all there was to it. Judson and his companion, "riding rings around them," kept them pinned to the water-hole in spite of one or two sallies, when the officials of the law kept safely behind cover and had all the advantage.

Three days later a gaunt, haggard and unshaven trio in blue overalls emerged from the mesquite about the water-hole and held hands up wearily. Judson made them advance to his position behind a rock.

"Are you fellers about through?" he demanded, pistol in hand.

"Aw, what's the use? Our grub run out yesterday."

Judson and the deputy happily had been provided with full saddle-bags. The old bandit chuckled.

"Where's your guns?" he demanded, seeing their empty holsters.

"Over by the water-hole."

"Heh! By the way, what became of them two old silver-mounted guns you took away from me?"

"Oh, they were no good."

"No good, hey? Well, what did you do with 'em?"

"Aw, we chucked 'em under the freight platform at Forbes Station."

The old villain made mental note for a trip to that station, then stepped forward and put a hand into the pocket of the formerly masterful robbers, extracting money and various odds and ends, including a shiny trick cigar-lighter, which he examined closely.

"What do you want that thing for?" demanded the deputy.

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"Heh! That's a reward of merit—mebbe. If the Injun does his job he gits it."

The deputy thought it the whim of an old man and turned to other things, collecting the money and other loot from the robbers. The total was some twenty-one thousand dollars.

Some time later they pushed ahead over the sands and rocks of the desert and into Gila County. Later they camped for the night in a rocky gully, and next afternoon the sheriff arrived with a whole delegation armed to the teeth. The sheriff drew up his stately cavalcade and dismounted, addressing the once masterful robber.

"Why, hello, Joe," he greeted. "Welcome home. Glad to meet you again. Have a pleasant outing?"

The jailbird muttered some unpleasantries. The sheriff turned to Judson.

"Good work," he congratulated. "I'll say that old Apache of yours is the best tracker in the country. We chased that fool automobile all over the map and landed up in Gila City again, losing the trail on the asphalt."

Judson was peering through the posse.

"Where's that durned old Injun?" he demanded.

"There he is—over on that white horse. He's sort of sulky. You see, he lands in jail again as soon as this party's over."

"Jail? What for?"

"Well, you remember that sporty young Indian tracker of mine? Henry Harris got into town and while we were organizing for this trip he and the young Injun met up at Fifth and Main Streets.

"They had words, the youngster got sassy, the old Apache pulled a gun, and now the youngster's in hospital. That Henry Harris is sure one untamed Apache if there ever was one."

Judson silently walked over to Harris and produced the cigar-lighter, clutched by an eager brown paw. Judson was just. It was the Indian's due.

The old frontiersman felt, however, that a few caustic remarks were also due. He felt that the Indian's conduct in the hills had been reprehensible. He never liked Apaches anyhow.

"Heh! I see you've shot another Injun," he lashed out. "Good work. Keep it up. Shoot the whole durned tribe and then buy a ca'tridge for yourself."

Henry Harris looked down with a dark, inscrutable face, and his lethal brown eyes considered Judson reflectively.

"Go ahead—talk," he invited coldly. "I fight Injun—all right. I fight white man—no. Go ahead, talk. Talk like other day—call me names. You safe. Every white man safe, no matter how much —— fool. Talk, you —— ——. I keep my word."

And Henry Harris gathered his reins and turned away with solemn dignity, leaving his purple-faced victim helpless.

MY BUNK

by Earl H. Emmons

YOU kin talk about your Ostermoors, your mattresses an' springs,
An' your sanitary cots, an' all the rest,
But fer me they's no compare between them highfalutin things
An' the kind o' bed I've allus knowed the best.

Oh, I've wrassled round with Morpheus a many blasted night
On the deck o' some dang tender-footed berth,
But fer plain an' fancy sleepin' when I want to do it right,
Why my bed o' boughs beats anything on earth.

All I want is jest the open with a roof o' Summer sky
An' the moonlight siftin' down between the trees,
With the wind a-softly warblin' in a sort o' lullaby
An' the smell o' pine an' hemlock in the breeze.

Fer they's nothin' that's as soothin' as the oozin' scent o' pine,
When yer bones is jest a-tired an' achin' heap,
An' they ain't no patent mattress that's a half as soft as mine;
Then I waller down, an' man, how I kin sleep!

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A Scout for VIRGINIA

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "Red Belts," "Kings of the Missouri," etc.

CHAPTER I

THREE TRAVELERS

IT WAS good to rest in the seclusion of my hollow sycamore. It was pleasant to know that in the early morning my horse would soon cover the four miles separating me from the soil of Virginia. As a surveyor, and now as a messenger between Fort Pitt and his lordship, the Earl of Dunmore, our royal governor, I had utilized this unique shelter more than once when breaking my journey at the junction of the Monongahela and the Cheat.

I had come to look upon it with something of affection. It was one of my wilderness homes. It was roughly circular and a good eight feet in diameter, and never yet had I been disturbed while occupying it.

During the night I heard the diabolic screech of a loon somewhere down the river, while closer by rose the pathetic song of the whippoorwill. Strange contrasts and each very welcome in my ears.

I was awake with the first rays of the sun mottling the bark and mold before the low entrance to my retreat. The rippling melody of a mocking-bird deluged the thicket.

Honey-bees hovered and buzzed about my tree, perhaps investigating it with the idea of moving in and using it for a storehouse. The Indians called them the "white man's flies," and believed they heralded the coming of permanent settlements. I hoped the augury was a true one, but there were times when I doubted.

Making sure that the priming of my long Deckhard rifle was dry, I crawled out into the thicket and stood erect. As far as the eye could roam stretched the rich bottom-lands and the low ridges, covered with the primeval growths of giant walnuts, maples, oaks and hickory. Small wonder that the heart of the home-seeker should covet such a country.

Groves of beeches, less desired by settlers, were noisy with satisfied squirrels. From river to ridge the air was alive with orioles and cardinals and redstarts. And could I have stood at the western rim of my vision I would have beheld the panorama repeated, only even richer and more delectable; for there was nothing but the ancient forest between me and the lonely Mississippi.

Birds and song and the soft June air and the mystery of the Kentucky country tugging at my heart-strings. I felt the call very strong as I stood there in the thicket, and gladly would I have traveled West to the richest game-region ever visited by white men.

From some who had made the trip I had heard wonderful stories of Nature's prodigality. There were roads made through tangled thickets by immense herds of buffaloes smashing their way five abreast. Deer were too innumerable to estimate. To perch a turkey merely required that one step a rod or two from the cabin door. Only the serious nature of my business, resulting from the very serious nature of the times, held me back.

On this particular morning when the Summer was in full tide of song and scents and pleasing vistas, I was bringing important dispatches to Governor Dunmore. The long-looked-for Indian war was upon us. From the back-country

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to the seaboard Virginians knew this year of 1774 was to figure prominently in our destiny.

In the preceding Spring we realized it was only a question of time when we must "fort" ourselves, or abandon the back-country, thereby losing crops and cabins. When young James Boone and Henry Russell were killed by Indians in Powell's Valley in the Fall of 1773, all hope of a friendly penetration of the western country died. Ever since Colonel Bouquet's treaty with the Ohio tribes on the collapse of Pontiac's War the frontier had suffered from many small raids, but there had been no organized warfare.

During those ten years much blood had been spilled and many cabins burned, but the red opposition had not been sufficient to stop the backwoodsmen from crowding into the Alleghanies. And only a general war could prevent them from overflowing down into the bottoms of the Ohio. The killing of friendly Shawnees at Pipe Creek below the mouth of the Little Kanawha in April, followed three days later by the cruel slaughter of John Logan's relatives and friends at Baker's groggery opposite Yellow Creek, had touched off the powder.

But the notion that the massacre of Logan's people at Joshua Baker's house was the cause of the war is erroneous. For any one living in the country at the time to have believed it would be too ridiculous. That brutal affair was only one more brand added to a fire which had smoldered for ten years.

It happened to be the last piece of violence before both red and white threw aside make-believe and settled down to the ghastly struggle for supremacy. Hunters bound for Kentucky had suffered none from the Indians except as they had a brush with small raiding-parties. But when Daniel Boone undertook to convey his wife and children and the families of his friends into the wonderland the natives would have none of it. In killing his son and young Russell, along with several of their companions, the Indians were merely serving notice of no thoroughfare for home-builders.

So let us remember that Dunmore's War was the inevitable outcome of two alien races determined on the same prize, with each primed for a death-struggle by the memories of fearful wrongs. It is useless to argue which race gave the first cause for retaliation; it had been give and take between them for many years. Nor should our children's children, because of any tendency toward ancestor-worship, be allowed to believe that the whites were invincible and slaughtered more natives than they lost of their own people.

There were white men as merciless and murderous as any Indians, and some of these had a rare score of killings to their discredit. Yet in a man-for-man account the Indians had all the best of it. Veterans of Braddock's War insisted that the frontier lost fifty whites for each red man killed. Bouquet and other leaders estimated the ratio in Pontiac's War to have been ten to one in favor of the Indians.

This reduction proved that the settlers had learned something from the lessons taught in the old French War. Our people on the border knew all this and they were confident that in the struggle now upon them they would bring the count down to one for one. * So let the youngsters of the new day learn the truth; that is, that the backwoodsmen clung to their homes although suffering most hideously.

VIRGINIA understood she must sustain the full brunt of the war, inasmuch as she comprised the disputed frontier. It was upon Virginia that the red hatred centered. I never blamed the Indians for this hate for white cabins and cleared forests and permanent settlements. Nor should our dislike of the Indians incite sentimental people, ignorant of the red man's ways and lacking sympathy with our ambitions, to denounce us as being solely responsible for the brutal aspects such a struggle will always display.

It should also be remembered that the men of Pennsylvania were chiefly concerned with trade. Their profits depended upon the natives remaining undisturbed in their ancient homes. Like the French they would keep the red man and his forests unchanged.

Naturally they disapproved of any migrations over the mountains; and they were very disagreeable in expressing their dissatisfaction. We retorted, overwarmly doubtless, by accusing our northern sister of trading guns and powder to the Indians for horses stolen from Virginia. There was bad blood between the two colonies; for history to gloss over the fact is to perpetrate a lie. Fort Pitt, recently renamed Fort Dunmore by the commandant, Dr. John Connolly, controlled the approach to the Ohio country. It was a strong conditional cause of the war, peculiar as the statement may sound to those born long after the troublesome times of 1774.

Pennsylvania accused our royal governor of being a land-grabber and the catspaw or partner of land-speculators. His lordship was interested in land-speculation and so were many prominent Virginians. It is also true that claims under Virginia patents would be worthless if Pennsylvania controlled the junction of the Monongahela and the Alleghany rivers and sustained her claims to the surrounding country.

It is another fact that it was the rifles of Virginia which protected that outlying region, and that many of the settlers in the disputed territory preferred Virginian control. Every

*It is estimated that the whites lost three to the Indians' one in Dunmore's War.

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one realized that should our militia push the Indians back and win a decisive victory our claims would be immensely strengthened. And through Dr. Connolly we were already handling affairs at Fort Pitt.

Because of these and other facts there was an excellent chance for an intercolonial war. I am of the strong opinion that an armed clash between the hotheads of the two provinces would have resulted if not for the intervention of the Indian war.

At the beginning of hostilities the Indians proclaimed they would whip Pennsylvanians and would roast Virginians. However when Benjamin Speare, his wife and six children were massacred on Dunkard Creek early in June, with similar bloody murders being perpetrated at Muddy Creek, all on Pennsylvania soil, by John Logan, the Mingo chief, there was less foolish talk north of the line.

All these thoughts of raids and reprisals, of white striving to outdo red in cruelty, may seem to harmonize but ill with that soft June morning, the flight of the redstart, the song of the oriole and the impish chatter of the squirrels. Beech and oak urged one to rest in the shade; the limpid waters of the river called for one to strip and bathe.

To heed either invitation incautiously invited the war-ax to be buried in the head. However, we of the border always had had the Indian trouble, and each generation had taken its pleasure with a wary eye and ready weapons. Although the times were very dangerous and I was serving as scout for thirty-three cents a day I could still enjoy the sweet aromas and sympathize with the song of birds and yet keep an eye and ear open for that which concerned my life.

In ascending the Monongahela I had seen many settlers crossing the river to make the eastern settlements. I was told that a thousand men, women and children had crossed during the space of twenty-four hours. Down on the Clinch and Holston the settlers were either "forting" or fleeing.

Much of this retirement was compelled by the sad lack of powder and lead, even of guns. More than one settler depended entirely upon ax or scythe for protection. Such were prevented from using the advantage of their stout walls and could do the foe no mischief until after the door had been battered down, when of course all the advantage shifted to the side of the invader.

By this I do not mean to disparage such tools as implements of war. A sturdy fellow with both hands gripping a scythe can do an amazing amount of damage at close quarters, as more than one Shawnee war-party has learned.

Briefly summed up, there were dissensions between some of the colonies over the land-disputes; sparks were flying between the colonies and the mother-country; every day brought gruesome news from the back-country; there was a scarcity of guns and ammunition; militia captains were eagerly stealing each other's men to fill their quotas.

Yet regardless of all these troubles let it be understood that for once the borders welcomed war and insisted upon it. As early as March, a month before the Pipe and Yellow Creek outrages, the Williamsburg *Gazette* printed an address to Lord Dunmore, stating that "an immediate declaration of war was necessary, nay inevitable." Not only did the whites want the war, but the natives also were eager for it.

But enough of whys and wherefores, as they make poor story-telling, and leave me, Basdel Morris, overlong in quitting the thicket about my tree. And yet the wise man always looks backward as well as forward when entering on a trail, and children yet unborn may blaze a better trace if they understand what lies behind them.

I ate my breakfast there in the thick growth, packing my hungry mouth with parched corn and topping off with a promise of turkey, once I drew beyond the danger-belt. Trying to make myself believe my appetite was satisfied, I began the delicate task of leaving cover without leaving any signs. My horse was a fourth of a mile from my tree, so that in finding him the Indians would not find me.

THE river sang a drowsy song a short distance from my tree and down a gentle slope. I knew of a spring beneath its bank, and I was impatient to taste its cold waters. I moved toward it slowly, determined that if an Indian ever secured my long black hair it would not be because he caught me off my guard. With ears and eyes I scouted the river-bank.

The flights and songs of birds and the boisterous chatter of the squirrels now became so many helps. There were no intruders in the grove of beech. There was no one between me and the river. At last I passed under some overhanging boughs and slipped down the bank to the water's edge.

Once more I searched both banks of the river, the Cheat, and then ventured to drink. Like an animal I drank a swallow, then threw up my head and glanced about. It took me some time to drink my fill, but I was not tomahawked while at the spring. At last I was convinced I had the bank to myself; and satisfied that the screen of overhanging boughs screened me from any canoe turning a bend up or down-stream I removed my clothes and very softly slipped into the water.

There could be no hilarious splashing nor swimming, but the silent immersion was most refreshing. It was while supine on my back

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with only my nose and toes above water that I received my first alarm for that morning. My position being recumbent I was staring up at the sky and in the direction of up-stream, and I saw a speck.

It was circling and from the west a smaller speck was hastening eastward. A third tiny speck showed on the southern sky-line. Turkey-buzzards. The one circling had sighted dead beast or man. The others had seen the discoverer's maneuvers advertising his good luck; and now each scavenger in hastening to the feast drew other scavengers after him.

I crawled ashore and hurriedly began slipping into my few garments. I drew on my breeches and paused for a moment to part the shrubbery and stare into the sky. I was startled to observe the buzzards—there were three of them now—were much nearer, as if following something. I pulled on my leggings and finished fitting my moccasins carefully about the ankles to keep out all dust and dirt and took my second look.

The buzzards were five, and in making their wide circles they had again cut down the distance. Then it dawned upon me that they were following something in the river. I watched the bend, the buzzards ever circling nearer, their numbers continually being augmented by fresh arrivals. At last it came in sight—a canoe containing one man.

Hastily drying my hands on my hunting-shirt, I picked up my rifle and drew a bead on the distant figure. The man was an Indian and was allowing the canoe to drift. But why should the turkey-buzzards follow him? As I pondered over this problem and waited to learn whether he be friendly or hostile, there came the *spang* of a rifle from my side of the river and above me.

A second shot quickly followed and I thought the figure in the canoe lurched to one side a bit. Still there was no attempt made to use the paddle. The shrill ear-splitting scream of a panther rang out, and this like the two shots was on my side of the river. That the Indian made no move to escape was inexplicable unless the first shot had killed him outright.

The canoe was deflected toward my hiding-place, and I expected to hear another brace of shots from above me. But there was no more shooting, and the canoe swung in close enough for me to observe the Indian was holding something between his teeth. I now recognized him as a friendly native, a Delaware; and anxious to protect him from those lurking on the bank I showed myself and softly called out:

"Bald Eagle is in danger! Paddle in here."

He paid no attention to my greeting, although the canoe continued its approach until it grounded against the bank. I slipped down to the water to urge him to come ashore and take cover. He was a well-known chief, and for years very friendly to the whites. The thing he held in his mouth was a piece of journey-cake, only he was not eating it as I had first supposed. As I gained the canoe I noticed a paddle placed across it so as to support his back, and another so braced as to prop up his head.

The man was dead. There was a hideous wound at the back of his head. He had been struck down with an ax. While I was weighing this gruesome discovery the scream of the panther rang out again and close by, and the bushes parted and I wheeled in time to strike up a double-barrel rifle a young man was aiming at the chief.

"You've fired at him twice already, Shelby Cousin," I angrily rebuked. "Isn't that about enough?"

"Nothin' ain't 'nough till I git his sculp," was the grim reply; and Cousin, scarcely more than a boy, endeavored to knock my rifle aside.

"At least you ought to kill before you scalp," I said.

His lips parted and his eyes screwed up into a perplexed frown and he dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground. Holding the barrels with both hands, he stared down at the dead man.

"Some one busted him with a ax most vastly," he muttered. "An' me wastin' two shoots o' powder on the skunk!"

"Without bothering to notice the turkey-buzzards that have been following him down the river," I said.

He looked sheepish and defended himself—

"The cover was too thick to see anything overhead."

"He was a friend to the whites. He has been murdered. His killer struck him down from behind. As if murder wasn't bad enough, his killer tried to make a joke of it by stuffing journey-cake in his mouth. The cake alone would tell every red who sees him that a white man killed him."

"Only trouble with the joke is that there ain't a couple o' him," hissed young Cousin. "But the fellor who played this joke owes me two shoots of powder. I 'low he'll pay me."

"You know who he is?"

"Seen Lige Runner up along. I 'low it will be him. Him an' me look on Injuns just the same way."

"It's fellows like him and Joshua Baker and Daniel Greathouse who bring trouble to the settlements," I said.

HIS face was as hard as a mask of stone as he looked at me. His eyes, which should have glowed with the amiable fires of youth, were as implacably baleful as those of a mad wolf.

"You don't go for to figger me in with Baker an' Greathouse?" he fiercely demanded.

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"I know your story. It wouldn't be just to rank you with them."

"Mebbe it's my story what turns other men ag'in' these critters," he coldly suggested. "There was a time when I had a daddy. He talked like you do. He called some o' the red devils his friends. He believed in 'em, too. Cornstalk, the Shawnee devil, was his good friend.

"Daddy an' mammy 'lowed we could live on Keeney's Knob till all git-out busted up an' never have no trouble with friendly Injuns. That was ten years ago. I was eight years old. Then Cornstalk made his last visit. Daddy had just brought in some deer meat. Made a feast for th' bloody devils.

"I happened to be out in the woods when it was done. Or, happen like, I'd 'a' gone along 't'others. There's two things that'll make me hunt Cornstalk an' his Shawnees to the back-country o' hell—my little sister, an' their overlookin' to wipe me out."

He turned and stood by the canoe, glaring down at the dead man. All Virginia was familiar with the terrible story of the Cousin massacre at Keeney's Knob. Fully as tragic and horrible to me, perhaps, was the terrible change in the only survivor. He became an Injun-killer as soon as he was able to handle a rifle; and a Virginia boy of twelve was ashamed when he failed to bring down his squirrel shot through the head.

At eighteen Cousin was hated and feared by the Ohio tribes. He was not content to wait for Shawnee and Mingo to cross the river, but made frequent and extremely hazardous trips into their country. His panther-scream had rung out more than once near the Scioto villages to proclaim a kill.

Isaac Crabtree was a killer, but his hate did not make him rash. Jesse Hughes would have been one of our best border scouts if not for his insane hatred of Indians. He killed them wherever he met them; nor did he, like Crabtree, wait until the advantage was all on his side before striking. William White, William Hacker and John Cutright massacred five inoffensive Indian families at Bulltown on the Little Kanawha as a reprisal for the Stroud family, slain on Elk River.

Elijah Runner, who Cousin believed had killed Bald Eagle, was yet another with an insatiable thirst for red blood. Many others were notorious Injun-killers. Some were border ruffians; some were driven to the limits of hate because of scenes they had witnessed or losses they had suffered. But none were like Shelby Cousin.

Other killers would drink and make merry at times, keeping their hate in the background until a victim appeared. Young Cousin carried his hate in his face as well as in his heart at all times. There was nothing on earth, so far as I ever learned, no friendships, no maiden's smile, which could divert him from the one consuming passion of his life.

His mention of his sister revealed the deepest depth of his anguish. His parents were beyond all suffering and the need of pity. His sister a year older than he, had been carried off. The pursuers found her clothing by a creek near the ruined cabin; but it had never been proved that she was dead.

It was this, the uncertainty of her fate which daily fed the boy's hate and drove him to the forest, where he sought to learn the truth and never relinquished an opportunity to take his revenge.

"If Lige Runner done for him he sure did a good job," Cousin muttered. "He sure did make tomahawk improvements on him." *

"You never kill in or near the settlements as some of them do," I said.

His eyes closed and what should have been a rarely handsome boyish face, a face to stir the heart of any maiden to beating faster, was distorted with the pain he was keeping clamped down behind his clenched teeth.

"That's only because o' what I seen at Keeney's Knob," he hoarsely whispered. "When I meet one of 'em in a settlement I skedaddle afore I lose my grip. I mustn't do anything that'll fetch a parcel of 'em down to carry off some other feller's little sister. If I know'd she was dead——"

"If you'd stop killing long enough to question some of the Shawnees you might learn the truth."

He shook his head slowly, and said:

"I stopped—just afore the killin' at Baker's Bottom. Kept my Injun alive all night. But he wouldn't tell."

I shuddered at the cold-bloodedness of him.

"You tortured him and perhaps he knew nothing to tell," I said.

"If he didn't know nothin' it was hard luck for him," he quietly agreed. "But I was sartain from things he had boasted that he was at the Knob that day. What you goin' to do with this varmint?" And he nodded toward the dead voyager.

"My business won't allow me to take the time necessary to dig a grave where his friends can't find him or wild animals dig him out. We'll set him afloat again and hope he'll journey far down the river before his friends find him. He was friendly to us——"

"Friendly ——" interrupted the boy. "So was Cornstalk friendly!"

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*Tomahawk improvements. Settlers often took possession by blazing trees with axes and carving their names thereon. Such entry to land was not legal, but usually was recognized and later made valid by legal process. Such was the claim made to the site of modern Wheeling, West Virginia, by Ebenezer Silas, and Jonathan Zane in 1770.

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I REMOVED the journey-cake from the grinning mouth and placed the rigid figure in the bottom of the canoe. Before I could push the craft into the current young Cousin grunted with satisfaction and pointed to two bullet-holes, close together, just back of the ear.

"Knew I must hit pretty close to where I was shootin'," he muttered as he made up the bank.

I shoved the canoe from shore and called after him—

"If you will wait until I get my horse we might travel together."

He waved his hand in farewell and informed me:

"I've got some business west o' here. It's out o' your path if you're makin' for the Greenbriar."

"But a bit of gossip. I'm just back from Fort Pitt," I said.

He halted and leaned on his rifle and stared at me with lack-luster eyes, and in a monotonous voice said:

"Ed. Sharpe, Dick Stanton, Eph Drake an' Bill Harrel are scoutin' the head o' Powell's Valley. Wanted me to go but the signs wa'n't promisin' 'nough. Logan says he'll take ten sculps for one. He still thinks Michael Cresap led the killin' at Baker's an' Cresap was at Red Stone when it happened. Cresap wants to be mighty keerful he don't fall into Logan's hands alive.

"Half the folks on the South Fork o' the Clinch can't raise five shoots o' powder. Folks on Rye Cove been movin' over to the Holston, leavin' their cattle behind. Mebbe I'll scout over that way by'n' by.

"Augusta boys ain't goin' to have any man in their militia company that stands under six feet in his moccasins. Folks between the heads o' Bluestone an' Clinch so skeered they prob'ly won't stay to lay by their corn. Injuns signs up Sandy Creek way has made some o' Moccasin an' Copper Creek folks come off. I 'low that's 'bout all."

"Any signs of the Cherokees coming in?"

"Some says they will. T'others says they won't. Sort o' depends on whether they can keep Ike Crabtree from killin' of 'em off."

He threw his rifle over his shoulder and with a curt nod turned into the bushes and followed the bank to find a crossing. He was away on his fearful business; his youth was hopelessly corroded.

I scouted the spot where I had left my horse and discovered no signs of Indians. Unspanceling and mounting, I picked up my journey. I was passing through a mountainous country which contained many large meadows. These pleasant openings would accomodate many cattle if not for the Indian danger. They were thick with grass and enough hay could be cured on them to feed large herds throughout the Winter.

The bottom-lands, although smaller, were very rich. Along the hillsides I had no doubt but that grain could easily be grown. Altogether it was a most pleasing country if lasting peace ever could come to the border. While I observed the natural advantages and fancied the glades and bottoms dotted with happy cabins, I did not forget the dead Delaware floating down the river, nor ignore the probability of some of his kin discovering the murder before sundown and taking the path for reprisals.

There was no suggestion of war in the warm sunshine and busy woods-life. Birds rejoiced in their matings and the air was most gracious with the perfume of growing things. The stirring optimism of Spring lingered with me. My heart was warm to rejoin old friends, to enjoy women's company; but never a moment did I neglect to scrutinize the trace ahead.

The day passed with no hint of danger. I had the world to myself when the sun was cradled by the western ridges. I found it a wonderful world, and I believed it was never intended that any race of savages, white or red, should hold such fair lands for hunting-preserves only.

That night, according to my custom, I spanceled my horse at a considerable distance from my camp. I had selected a spot on top of a ridge, where the maples and walnuts grew thick. I perched a turkey in the gloaming and roasted him over a small fire. Having eaten, I walked to the edge of the growth and gazed toward the West. Across the valley a light suddenly twinkled on the side of a ridge. I first thought that hunters were camping there; and as the light increased to a bright blaze I decided there was a large company of them and that they had no fear of Indians.

But as I watched the flames grew higher. What had been a white light became a ruddy light. The fire spread on both sides. My heart began to pound and I tilted my head to listen. The distance was too far for me to hear tell-tale sounds, still I fancied I could hear the yelling of demons dancing around a burning cabin.

A dead man floating down the river; a boy seeking vengeance somewhere near the blazing home, and a scout for Virginia traveling toward the Greenbriar.

CHAPTER II

INDIAN-HATERS

I JOURNEYED up the Cheat and left its headwaters and proceeded down the Greenbriar without observing any signs of the red peril which was creeping upon the country. A great gray eagle, poised at the apex of my upturned gaze, appeared to be absolutely stationary; a little brown flycatcher, darting across

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my path, made much commotion. Red-crested woodpeckers hammered industriously in dead wood for rations. So long as their tappings resounded ahead of me I feared no ambush.

Wherever nut-trees stood the squirrels made more noise than did the house of burgesses when dissolved by Governor Dunmore for expressing revolutionary sentiments. A most gracious country, and because of its fairness, most fearfully beset. That which is worthless needs no sentinels. I met with no humans, white or red; but when within a few miles of Patrick Davis' home on Howard Creek I came upon a spot where three Indians had eaten their breakfast that very morning.

I knew they must be friendly to the whites as they had not attempted to hide their temporary camp. They had departed in the direction of the creek, which also was my destination. I planned resting there over night and then crossing the main ridge of the Alleghanies during the next day, stopping the night with the Greenwood family on Dunlap's Creek.

Thence it would be an easy ride to Salem where I would find Colonel Andrew Lewis, commander of the county militia. I hoped he would provide a messenger for forwarding my despatches to Governor Dunmore in Williamsburg. I had no desire to visit the seat of government, nor was my disinclination due to the bustle and confusion of its more than a thousand inhabitants.

A mile from where the Indians had camped I came upon two white men. They were at one side of the trace and curiously busy among some rocks at the top of a fifty-foot cliff. They were hauling a rope from a deep crack or crevice in the rocks and were making hard work of it.

We discovered each other at the same moment, and they called on me to lend them a hand. Leaving my horse in the trace, I hastened over the rough ground to learn what they wanted. As I drew nearer I recognized them as Jacob Scott and William Hacker, confirmed "Injun-haters."

"How d'ye do, Morris," greeted Hacker. "Catch hold here and help haul him up."

"Who is it?" I asked, seizing the rope which was composed of leather belts and spancel-ropes.

"Lige Runner," grunted Hacker, digging in his heels and pulling in the rope hand over hand. Runner, as I have said, was another implacable foe of all red men.

"All together!" panted Scott.

My contribution of muscle soon brought Runner's head into view. We held the rope taut while he dragged himself on to the ledge.

"Did you git it?" eagerly demanded Hacker.

The triumphant grin was surety for his success down the crevice. He rose and tapped a fresh scalp dangling at his belt.

"I got it," he grimly replied. "Had to follow him most to the bottom where his carcass was wedged between the rocks. Morning, Morris. Traveling far? Seen any Injun-signs on the way?"

I shook my head, preferring they should not learn about the three Indians making for Howard's Creek.

"What does all this mean, Runner? Do scalps grow at the bottom of holes?"

"This one seemed to," he answered with a deep chuckle. "Didn't git a fair crack at him, as he was running mighty cute. Rifle held fire the nick of a second too long. I knew he was mortal hit, but he managed to reach this hole. Then the skunk jumped in a-purpose to make us all this bother to git his scalp."

"Who was he?"

"Don't know. He was a good hundred and fifty yards away and going like a streak when I plugged him. It's too dark down in the hole to see anything."

"For all you know he was a friendly."

"We never see no friendlies," Hacker grimly reminded.

"'Cept when they're dead," ironically added Scott. "Our eyesight's terribly poor when they're alive."

"I call it dirty business. I wouldn't have hauled on the rope if I had known."

Runner lowered at me and growled:

"You're too finicky. A Injun is a Injun. Sooner they're all dead, the better. I kill 'em quicker'n I would a rattlesnake. A rattler gives notice when he's going to strike."

"If you've killed a friendly this work will cause much suffering among the outlying cabins."

"Bah! If we took good corn cakes and honey to the red devils they'd kill us every chance they got. We ain't forgitting what happened at Keeney's Knob, at the Clendennin farm on the Greenbriar; nor the scores of killings up in Tygart's Valley, and in other places. By ——! Give 'em the pewter every chance you can! That's my religion."

"That's the talk, Lige!" cried Scott. "Ike Crabtree would 'a' liked to been in this fun."

"He'll feel cut up when he hears about our luck," said Hacker.

"Crabtree's feelings do him credit," added Runner. "But his natural hankering to raise hair is stronger 'n his courage when he thinks there's more'n one Injun to dicker with. Young Shelby Cousin would be the best one for this business if it wa'n't for his fool notions about killing near a settlement."

"Cousin says you killed old Bald Eagle. I saw the Delaware floating down the Cheat in his canoe."

Runner laughed in huge delight, and cried:

"The world's mighty small after all. Ain't it the truth! So you seen him? Did he have

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the chunk of johnny-cake in his meat-trap?"

"He was friendly to the whites and harmless. It was a poor piece of work."

"The reason why we didn't sculp him was that it would 'a' spoiled the joke," defended Hacker. "With his hair on and the johnny-cake in his mouth, folks would think he was still alive till they got real close."

"The three of us done that," informed Scott, as jealous of Runner's receiving all the credit.

"Morris means it was a poor job because the chief was to be friendly to white folks," explained Runner, scowling at me.

"Morris, you'd better go up to Davis's and tell Ike Crabtree that," jeered Hacker.

"Crabtree is there, is he?" I said, deeply concerned for the safety of the three Indians.

"He started for there. He'll feel mighty well cut up when he hears about us and this Injun in the hole," gravely declared Scott.

"How many cabins on Howard's Creek now?" I asked; for a cabin could be put up in a few hours and the population at any point might greatly increase in the space of twenty-four hours. I had no desire to quarrel with the three men, and I realized that there was nothing I could say which would change their natures, or make them act in a human manner toward friendly Indians.

RUNNER was inclined to harbor resentment and refused to answer me. Hacker, however, readily informed me:

"There was five when I come through there last. With outlying settlers pouring in, there may be a dozen by this time. All I know is that the call's gone out for fifteen or twenty miles, asking every one to come in to the big log-rolling.

"Davis and t'others swear they won't come off the creek till they've harvested their corn. So they're going to have a rolling and build a fort and stick it out. We fellers reckon we'll go up there and have a hand in the fun-making."

"Up near the Pennsylvania line and west of the Cheat a cabin was burned a few nights ago," I said, hoping they might feel disposed to scout north in search of Indians who were not friendly.

If the trio should go to Howard's Creek and happen upon the three Indians I feared that nothing could prevent another ghastly affair. Possibly Crabtree already had struck, but I hoped not. The men were interested in my news and listened closely. I continued:

"It was a cabin. I know that, although I was too far away to investigate. I have a notion that young Cousin was somewhere near it when it burned."

"Then you can bet the young cuss gave his panther-screech and made his kill," exclaimed Scott.

"If you men want to do the settlers on Howard's Creek a good turn you might scout up there and look for signs."

"I 'low the signs wouldn't be very fresh now," said Runner. "Show me a fresh footing and I'm keen to follow it. But just looking round after the skunks have moved on ain't my notion of a good time."

"I 'low Lige is right," decided Hacker. "If the reds was there a few nights ago they may be down this way by this time. Either that or they've sneaked back across the Ohio. I 'low there'll be more up to the creek."

"That's my motion," chimed in Scott. "Show us fresh signs and we're like good dogs on the scent. We'd better go to the rollin'."

"There's many Indians who need killing badly," I said. "But if you men persist in killing friendly Indians we'll have the Delawares joining in with the Shawnees and Mingos."

"We don't hanker for any more Moravian missionary talk," coldly warned Runner. "As for the Delawares dipping into the dish, let 'em come. Let 'em all come together! The sooner we smoke their bacon, the sooner the Holston and Clinch and Tygart's Valley will be safe for our women and children. As for that old cuss of a Bald Eagle, we're right glad you seen him. It shows others will see him. That's the sort of a notice we're serving on every redskin in Virginia."

It was obvious they would not relinquish their plan of visiting Howard's Creek, and it was equally plain they preferred to travel without my company. So I returned to the trace and mounted and rode on.

As I neared the creek I came upon several settlers hurrying in from their isolated cabins, and I was pleased to see they had taken time to collect their few cattle and bring them along. Of the five men I talked with there were only two who had guns. The others were armed with axes and big clubs of oak.

One lean fellow carried a long sapling to the end of which he had made fast a long butcher-knife. One of the gunmen said to me that he hoped there would be "a lively chunk of a fight" although he and his friend had only one charge of powder apiece. These two were young men, and like many of their generation they imitated the Indian to the extent of wearing thigh-leggings and breech-clouts.

The ends of the latter were passed through the belt in front and behind, and were allowed to hang down in flaps. These flaps were decorated with crude beadwork. Around their heads they wore red kerchiefs. Two of the older men had wives. These women would impress a resident of the seacoast as being stolid of face.

In reality the continuous apprehension of an Indian raid had frozen their features into a

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wooden expression. Their eyes were alive enough. I counted ten children, six of whom were girls. I do not think one of the youngsters was more than twelve years old.

The boys were continually bemoaning their lack of guns. The girls seemed happy over the adventure and prattled a stream about the new people they would see at the creek. I think every one of them had brought along a doll made from rags, corn-cobs or wood. The maternal was very strong in their stout little hearts.

One flaxen-haired miss consented to ride before me after my solemnly assuring her that horseback travel would not make her dollie sick. She shyly confessed her great joy in attending "rollin's." Her folks, she said, had not been invited to the last "rollin'," although they lived within fifteen miles of it; and her daddy and mammy had been greatly incensed.

But this, fortunately, was a bee where no one waited to be invited, each settler, living far or near, having an equal equity in the work. Long before we reached the scene of activities we heard the loud voices of the men, the hilarious cries of young folks and the barking of several dogs. My little companion twisted nervously, her blue eyes wide with excitement. Then she was sliding from the horse and with her doll clutched to her side, was scampering ahead with the others.

Then we grown-ups reached the edge of the clearing. Hacker had reported five cabins. Now there were seven, and if the people continued to arrive there must soon be twice that number. At the first of it the overflow would take up quarters among those already housed, or in the fort when it was finished.

Ordinarily a settler girdled his trees and chopped them down when they were dead, and then burned them into long logs. Not until the trees were down and burned into suitable lengths were invitations to the rolling sent out. As this was an emergency rolling the usual custom could not be followed.

Some of the dead trees were being burned into sections with small fires built on top and pressed against the wood by butt-ends of logs we called nigger-heads. Boys and girls were feeding small fuel to these fires. Charred logs left over from former rollings were being yanked out and built into the walls of the fort. As not enough seasoned timber was available for such a large structure green logs were being utilized.

The settlers behind me handed their two guns, clubs and other belongings over to the small boys, and with a nod and a word of greeting joined the workers. The women and girls looked after the cattle. Those of the women who were not working among the logs were busy in the cabins cooking large quantities of food, for we ate marvelously in those old days.

As in peaceful times, when a happy home was to evolve from the "rollin'," the usual pot-pie, composed of boiled grouse, pigeon and venison, and always with dumplings, was the principal dish of the feasting. On a stump, accessible to all who needed it, rested a squat jug containing rum.

I TURNED my horse loose near the fort and sought out Davis. He was inside the fort, superintending the work. The walls of this were well up. As the first need was shelter, and as the Indians might strike at any moment, no time was lost with a puncheon floor. The earth must do until the men could have a breathing-spell. Four tight walls and a stout roof was the best they could hope for.

Davis paused long enough to inform me that if time permitted they would build the fort two stories high and stockade it with twelve-foot posts. From his worried expression and obvious anxiety to get back to his work I did not believe he had any hope of building more than a one-story shell.

When the Indians struck they would strike with a rush. They would plan on a quick assault taking the settlers by surprise. They dared not remain to conduct a prolonged siege. The fort when completed would not be any stronger than the average cabin; it would simply accommodate more defenders.

The nearest water was a spring some twenty yards from the fort. This failure to provide for a water-supply was an amazing characteristic of many frontier defenses. There was no reason why the fort should not have been built close by the spring, or even over it. I said as much to Davis, but he defended:

"It would place us too near the woods. Their fire-arrers could fall on us too easy."

I reminded him that as the fort was now they would have but little water to extinguish a fire, whereas the spring would have afforded an inexhaustible supply. However it was too late to change their plans and I volunteered to collect kettles and tubs and organize a water-squad so there might be plenty of water in the fort each night.

"Might be a good plan," agreed Davis. "But I 'low if the Injuns come it'll all be over, one way or t'other, afore we have time to git thirsty."

I briefly explained to Davis my business as dispatch-bearer, so he might understand my reason for departing in the morning. He was generous enough to insist that I ran a greater risk in crossing the mountains alone than I would encounter by remaining at the creek.

I left him and levied on kettles to be delivered after supper and then returned to the fort. I had barely arrived when the dogs began

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barking and several horses came running through the stumps from the north end of the clearing. Before the alarm could find expression in shouts and a semblance of defense a deep voice called from the woods:

"White men! Friends! Hacker, Scott and Runner."

A rousing cheer greeted these newcomers, and one enthusiast grabbed up the jug and ran to meet them. Each of the three drank deeply and were rewarded with more cheers. If they were murderous in their hatred they would be stout defenders. As for their attitude toward all Indians, there were but few along the border who did not have some cause for hating the natives.

This sentiment of the frontier was shown when Henry Judah, arrested for killing some friendly Indians on the South Branch, was rescued by two hundred pioneers. After his irons were knocked off the settlers warned the authorities it would not be well to place him in custody a second time. Nor was Judah the only man thus snatched from the law.

Men like Hacker and his companions would do very little manual labor. They did not build homes but were always roaming about the country. This trait was of value to men of the Davis type, inasmuch as the killers brought in much game when the home-makers were busy with their cabins or planting.

"Any news, Lige?" bawled Davis, his deep voice booming across the clearing and overriding the clamorous welcome of his neighbors.

"Found some footing and hoss-tracks," Runner yelled back.

"They'll be coming this way, the yaller dogs, and we're here to rub 'em up a bit!" boasted Scott.

"Jesse Hughes oughter be here," said one of the men who was notching the long logs.

"He'll be along if there's promise of a fight," assured Hacker. "Young Cousin and Ike Crabtree, too."

"I 'low them red devils would skin back to the Ohio like a burned cat if they know'd you boys was after 'em!" cried Widow McCabe, who was as strong as the average man and could swing an ax with the best of them. Her husband was killed on the Kanawha the year before, and her hatred of Indians was as intense as that of any killer.

"They'll sure know they've met with some trouble, Missus," modestly admitted Hacker.

The three men seated themselves on a knoll and watched the busy scene. I joined them and inquired about the footing they had observed. Scott informed me they had followed the trail toward the creek and then lost it.

"It was a small party of scouts, mebbe not more'n three," he said. "We sort o' reckon that they 'lowed they might be followed and so took to water. We 'lowed it was best to hustle along here and git in front of the fighting, instead o' losing time trying to find where they quit the creek. You're sticking along, we 'low."

"No need with all you men. I must carry my dispatches over the mountains tomorrow."

"Better think twice afore trying it alone. By tomorrow the mountain trace will probably be shut in by the reds," declared Hacker ominously.

"Then I must take my chances of breaking across country. His lordship must have the dispatches at the earliest possible minute."

"Of course," Runner agreed. "Wish you luck even if you have got a Quaker stomick when it comes to killing the vermin. But if you want to git across you'd better start at once. Them two or three scouts shows the devils are closing in. Every hour saved now means a dozen more chances for your hair to grow."

As I believed the footing the fellows found was left by the three Indians I had pronounced to be friendly, I was not much exercised in my mind by the warning. I did not believe the Indians would seek to cut off the settlement. They must strike and be off, and they would prefer to have the settlers in flight over the mountains, with the inevitable stragglers easily cut off, than to have them stubbornly remaining in the cabins and fort.

If time was not vital, and providing the Shawnees could bring a large force, then an encircling movement would be their game. But Cornstalk and Logan would not lead a big force into any of the valleys. They knew as well as the whites that the war was to be won by one decisive battle.

These isolated raids up and down the western valleys were simply of value in that they might unnerve the settlers and keep them from leaving their cabins to join the army Dunmore proposed to send against the Shawnee towns. And last of all I was fagged by my long ride and would have one night's unworried sleep, let the risk be ever so great.

THE dinner, much belated, was now ready and the workers were asked to assemble in and around the Davis cabin. Four men were left to do sentinel duty, and the children were told to keep on with their work and play as they would be served after the men had eaten. Huge pot-pies were hurried from all the cabins to where the backwoodsmen were waiting to prove their appetites.

Several jugs of rum garnished the feast. The Widow McCabe contributed a scanty stock of tea, but the men would have none of it

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on the grounds that it did not "stick to the ribs."

My helping of pie was served on a huge china plate that had been packed over the mountains with much trouble and when every inch of room was needed for the bare necessities. Thus tenacious were the women in coming to this raw country to preserve their womanliness. I might have thought I was being favored had not Mrs. Davis frankly informed me that her few pieces of china were shunned by her men-folks on the plea the ware "dulled their sculping-knives."

Finishing my meal, I seated myself on a stump and proceeded to remove my moccasins and mend them. Davis joined me in a similar task; for while it required only two or three hours to make a pair of moccasins it was necessary to mend them almost daily. Davis greatly admired the awl I bought over the mountains, although it was no more serviceable than the one he had made from the back spring of a clasp-knife.

A settler might be unfortunate enough not to possess a gun, but there was none who did not carry a moccasin-awl attached to the strap of his shot-pouch, a roll of buckskin for patches and some deerskin thongs, or whangs, for sewing. While we sat there barefooted and worked we discussed the pending big battle. He held what I considered to be a narrow view of the situation. He was for having every valley act on the defensive until the Indians were convinced they were wasting warriors in attempting to drive the settlers back over the mountains.

While we argued back and forth those children, having finished their dinner, took to playing at "Injun." The boys hid in ambush and the little girls endeavored to steal by them without being "sculped." Along the edge of the clearing were five or six sentinels. They were keeping only a perfunctory watch, their eyes and ears giving more heed to the laughter and banter than to the silent woods. At the northern end of the clearing some lovesick swain surrendered to sentiment and in a whining nasal voice began singing:

"Come all ye young people, for I'm going for to sing
Consarnin' Molly Pringle and her lov-yer Reuben King."

The thin penetrating shriek of a child somewhere in the forest pricked our ears, the clear falsetto of its fright silencing the singer and leaving his mouth agape. I began drawing on my moccasins, but before I could finish a wonderful transformation had taken place in the clearing. As if the cry had been a prearranged signal, six of the young men filed silently into the woods, moving one behind the other, their hunting-shirts now inside their belts leaving their thighs bare, as if they had been so many Shawnees.

They moved swiftly and silently with no more show of confusion or emotion than if they had been setting out on routine scout-duty. The child screamed again, but not before feasters and workers had become fighting-units. Those possessing guns ran quietly in scattering groups toward the forest, leaving the women to guard the clearing and children.

And the women! They were marvelous in their spirit. With scarcely a word they caught up the axes dropped by the men and formed a long line with the children behind them. Little girls became little mothers and hurried still smaller tots to the unfinished fort.

The woodsmen advanced to the woods, the women slowly fell back, herding the youngsters behind them. As I ran my best to make up for the time lost over my moccasins I passed the Widow McCabe. I shall never forget the ferocious gleam of her slate-gray eyes, nor the superb courage of the thin lips compressed in a straight line.

She moved with the grace of a forest cat, reluctant to fall back, her muscular arm swinging the heavy ax as if it were a toy. Abreast of her, and likewise refusing to retreat, was Moulton's wife, mother of three. She was a thin, frail-appearing little woman with prominent blue eyes, and her gaze was glassy as she stared at the woods, and her lips were drawn back in a snarl.

"Moulton gal missin'," ran down the line. "Git t'other younkers back."

The line began bending at the ends to form a half-circle. The distracted little mother left her place in it. Without a word to betray the anguish tearing at her heart she gathered her linsey petticoat snugly about her, and grasping an ax, ran swiftly toward the direction of the screaming. The Widow McCabe hesitated, and glanced over her shoulder. Satisfied the other women had the children well grouped and close to the fort, she darted after Mrs. Moulton.

"Keep back, you women!" yelled Elijah Runner. "Stay with the children! They're letting the child scream to fetch us into a ambush!"

This was excellent advice, but the widow and Mrs. Moulton gave it no heed. One was impelled by hate, the other by love; and as they crashed into the growth behind me each was worth a woodsman or two in hand-to-hand fighting. With unnerving abruptness a man laughed boisterously directly ahead of me. Yells and questions filled the arches of the deep wood.

"Everybody back! False alarm! Nothin' but the gal gittin' skeered," he shouted. "I'm fetchin' her in, an' th' feller what skeered her."

Explosive laughter from the men and much crude banter marked our relief. Mrs. Moulton dropped her ax and with both hands held to her face stumbled into the clearing. The Widow

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McCabe walked with her head bowed, the ax held limply. Although rejoicing over the child's safety, I suspected she regretted not having had a chance to use her ax.

"Here they come! Two babbies!" some one shouted.

Mrs. Moulton turned and ran toward the woods again, much as a hen-partridge scurries to its young.

THE bush-growth swayed and parted. First came the frightened child, and she redoubled her weeping on finding herself in her mother's arms. Behind the child came a grinning woodsman and back of him rode a tall man of very powerful build, but with a face so fat as to appear round and wearing an expression of stupidity.

It was my first glimpse of him, but I recognized him instantly from the many descriptions border men had given of him. He was known as "Baby" Kirst, and he was a Nemesis the Indians had raised against themselves, a piece of terrible machinery which their superstitions would not permit them to kill.

His intelligence was that of a child of seven. When about that age his people were massacred on the Greenbriar and he had been left for dead with a portion of his scalp ripped off and a ghastly wound in his head. By some miracle he had survived, but with his mental growth checked. Physically he had developed muscle and bone until he was a giant in strength.

The red men believed him to be under the protection of the Great Spirit, and when they heard him wandering through the woods, sometimes weeping like a peevish child because some little plan had gone awry, more often laughing uproariously at that which would tickle the fancy of a seven-year-old, they made mad haste to get out of his path.

His instinct to kill was aroused against Indians only. Perhaps it was induced by a vague memory of dark-skinned men having hurt him at some time. Nor was he always possessed by this ungovernable rage. Sometimes he would spend a day in an Indian camp, but wo to the warrior who even inadvertantly crossed his whims.

He was not skilled in woodcraft beyond the cunning necessary for surprizing easy game such as turkeys, squirrels and rabbits. Regardless of his enormous appetite food was gladly given him at every cabin; for wherever he sought shelter, that place was safe from any Indian attack.

While Mrs. Moulton hurried her child to the fort and hushed its weeping with pot-pie the young men raised a yelping chorus and came dancing into the clearing with all the prancing steps of the red men. Deep-voiced oaths and thunderous welcomes were showered upon Baby Kirst as he proudly rode among them, his huge face further distended by a broad grin.

Awkwardly dismounting from his rawbone horse, he stared around the circle and with one hand held behind him tantalizingly said:

"Got something. Sha'n't let you peek at it."

"Let's see it, Baby," coaxed Runner, his tone such as he might use in pleading with a child.

"No!" And Baby shook his head stubbornly and grinned mischievously.

"'Lasses on mush. Heaps of it, Baby," bribed Davis.

Baby became interested. Davis repeated his offer. Slowly Baby drew from behind him the scalp of a white man. It was long, dark brown hair, burned to a yellowish white at the ends by the sun.

"——! That's Ben Kirby's hair!" gasped Scott, staring in horror at the exhibit. Then aside, "Good God, he ain't took to killing whites, has he?"

"Where'd you git it, Baby?" coaxed Hacker. "Davis will give you a big bowl of mush and 'lasses."

"That man had it," proudly informed Baby, and he fished from the bosom of his hunting-shirt a hank of coarse black hair.

"A Shawnee sculp or I'm a flying-squirrel!" yelled Runner. "Don't you understand it, men? Some dog of a Shawnee rubbed out Kirby. His hair's been off his head these six weeks. No wonder he ain't come in to help you folks to fort.

"Baby meets this Shawnee and gives him his needings. The red devil's sculp ain't more'n three days old. Good for you, Baby! Good boy! Give him all the 'lasses he can hold. Needn't worry about any raid s'long as he stays here, Davis. You can just take your time in finishing that fort."

"If we could only keep him!" sighed Davis.

"But you can't," spoke up a young man. "Every one has tried. A day or two, yes. Then he must go back to the woods. When the Injuns failed to finish him off they did a mighty bad job for themselves."

"We'll keep him long's we can," said Davis. "Hi, mother! Fill the mixing-bowl with mush and cover it with sweeting."

As proud as a boy being praised by his elders Baby started to strut to the Davis cabin, but quickly fell into a limping walk and whimpered a bit.

"Crippled on account of rheumatiz," sighed Runner. "Rheumatiz has put more hunters and fighters out of business than the Ohio Injuns ever did. And poor Baby can't remember to always sleep with his feet to the fire. If we could git him a stout pair of shoes to wear in place of them spongy moccasins it would pay us."

Kirst was too grotesque to laugh at, and the

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settlers were grotesque when they smiled at his ferocious appetite, and in the next moment tried to buy the protection of his presence. Let him regularly patrol a dozen miles of frontier each day, and I would guarantee no Indian would knowingly cross his path.

More than one party of red raiders had unwittingly followed his trail, only to turn in flight as if the devil was nipping after them once they glimpsed his bulky figure, heard his whimpering or his loud laughter. The men followed him to the Davis cabin, each eager to contribute to the general gossip concerning the child-man's prodigious strength.

As my horse was straying toward the west side of the clearing I went to fetch him back and spancel him near the fort. I had secured him and was about to ride him back when a rifle cracked close at hand in the woods, and I heard a voice passionately jeering—

"I 'low that cotched ye where ye lived, didn't it?"

I drove my horse through the bushes and came upon a sickening scene. An Indian man and a squaw were seated on a horse. On the ground was another Indian. A glance told me he was dead from the small blue hole through the forehead. The man and woman on the horse remained as motionless as if paralyzed.

Isaac Crabtree stood reloading his long rifle, his sallow face twisted in a smile of vicious joy. As he rammed home the charge I crowded my horse against him and sent him sprawling. Turning to the Indians I cried, "Ride away! Ride quick!"

"We are friendly Cherokees!" cried the woman in that tongue. "That man there is called Cherokee Billy by white men." And she pointed to the dead man.

With that she swerved the horse about, kicked her feet into his ribs and dashed away, the man clinging on behind her, his dark features devoid of expression. An oath brought my head about. Crabtree was on his feet, his hand drawing his ax, his face livid with rage.

"—— you!" he stuttered. "Ye sp'iled my baggin' the three of 'em!"

"You've bagged Cherokee Billy, the brother of Oconostota, the great chief of the Cherokees," I wrathfully retorted. "It would have been well for the frontier if I could have arrived in time to bag you before you did it. The Cherokees have kept out of the war, but it'll be a wonder if they don't swarm up this creek when they hear of this murder."

"Let 'em come!" he yelled. "That's what we want. It'll take more'n you, Basdel Morris, to keep my paws clear of the critters once I git a bead on one of 'em. Git out of my way so's I can git my rifle. I'll have the three of 'em yet."

"If you make a move to follow them I'll shoot you," I promised.

BY THIS time men were crashing through the bushes. Then came a louder noise and Baby Kirst, mounted on his big horse, his broad face bedaubed with molasses, burst on the scene. A dozen settlers crowded into the spot behind him. Hacker and Runner were the first to see the dead Indian. With a whoop they drew their knives and rushed in to get the scalp. I drove them back with my horse and loudly informed them:

"It's Cherokee Billy, brother of Oconostota, who can send the whole Cherokee nation against you, or hold it back."

"I don't care what Injun it is," howled Hacker. "Hair's hair. Git out the way, or you'll git acquainted with my ax. I'll have that sculp."

"Not so fast," I warned. "The hair belongs to Crabtree here. Kill your own scalps. Crabtree doesn't care to take that scalp. He knows Oconostota has a long memory." And I swung about, my rifle across the saddle and in a direct line with the murderer's chin.

"It's my kill," growled Crabtree. "Morris held me up with his gun, or I'd bagged t'other two of 'em."

"By ——! I'd like to see him hold me up when there's red meat to be run down!" snarled Runner.

There were four killers present in addition to the irresponsible Kirst. I was helpless against them. I could not shoot a man down for proposing to follow two Indians, let the reds be ever so friendly toward the whites. But Patrick Davis had come to Howard's Creek to stay, and it was a problem he could handle. It at once developed that he did not fancy the prospect of a Cherokee reprisal. He stepped in front of Runner and in a low ugly voice said:

"You fellows quit this talk. 'Nough mischief has been done. Unless Oconostota can be smoothed down there'll be —— to pay from Rye Cove to Tygart's Valley. As for following t'other two, you'll reckon with me and my neighbors first."

"A dead Injun ain't worth quarreling over," spoke up Widow McCabe from the edge of the group; and her eyes glowed as they rested on Cherokee Billy.

Mrs. Moulton now came on the scene. She still had her husband, and she frantically called on her friends to prevent further bloodshed. The greater number of the men, while unwilling to criticize Crabtree for his dastardly murder, did not care to add to the Cherokees' anger, and they took sides with Davis. I believed the whole affair had ended, but Crabtree was crafty, and he caused fresh fear by reminding them:

"You folks are fools to let the only witnesses to that dawg's death git away and take word back to the Cherokees. If Morris hadn't took a hand there wouldn't 'a' been that danger."

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Many settlers were long used to classifying the red men with the wild animals along the border. Therefore, the question of killing the two fleeing Cherokees became a matter of policy, rather than of sentiment. But Davis, although he wavered, finally declared he would have none of it. He reminded his friends that they would soon be called by Dunmore to march against the Ohio tribes, and that it would not do to leave hostile Cherokees behind them to attack the valleys. Hacker, Runner, Scott and Crabtree perceived that the settlers were opposed to further bloodshed, but Crabtree still had a card to play. Turning to Baby Kirst, who was staring intently down on the dead man, he suddenly cried—

"Sweet sugar, Baby, if you ride and find two Injuns just gone away."

And he pointed in the direction taken by the man and woman, With a yelp of juvenile delight Baby slapped his horse and rode away down the valley.

"Now you've done it!" growled Davis, scowling blackly at Crabtree. "You've made trouble atween us and the Cherokees, and you've drove away the best defense against Injuns we could 'a' had."

"I don't have to have no loose-wit to stand 'tween me and Injuns," sneered Crabtree.

"You're better at killing unarmed Indians than in putting up a real fight," I accused. "You're not fond of traveling very far from a settlement when you draw blood. Shelby Cousin was telling me down on the Cheat that you like to be near a white man's cabin when you make a kill."

His sallow face flushed red, but he had no harsh words to say against young Cousin. Without replying to me he made for the Davis cabin to get something to eat, leaving Cherokee Billy for others to bury. I noticed it was the Widow McCabe, with her slate-gray eyes half-closed and gleaming brightly, who waited on Crabtree and heaped his plate with food.

What with the interruptions and the nervous tension of the men it was after sunset before the roof of the fort was finished. It was agreed that the men with families should sleep in the fort that night with the single men occupying the cabins nearest the fort. I took up my quarters in the Davis cabin, after reminding my friends again that I must start early in the morning to cross the mountains on my way to Colonel Lewis who lived near Salem.

"Why, land sake! To Salem! Why, look here! You'll be seeing my cousin, Ericus Dale!" excitedly exclaimed Mrs. Davis.

My emotion was far greater than that expressed by Mrs. Davis, but the dusk of early evening permitted me to conceal it. It was three years since I had seen the Dales, father and daughter. They were then living in Williamsburg. It was most astonishing that they should be now living in Salem. But this was going too fast.

It did not follow that Patricia Dale was in Salem because her father was there. In truth, it was difficult to imagine Patsy Dale being content with that little settlement under the eastern eaves of the mountains. Before I could find my tongue Mrs. Davis was informing her neighbors:

"My cousin, Ericus, ain't got many warm spots in his heart for Governor Dunmore. He's sure to be sot ag'in' this war. He's a very powerful man in the colony." Then to me, "I want you to see Patsy and tell her not to think of coming out here this Summer. She's not to come till the Injuns been well whipped.

"Coming out here?" I dully repeated.

"They was opinin' to when I last got word from 'em last March. They was at their home in Williamsburg, and the girl wrote she was going to Salem with her father, who had some trading-business to fix up. 'Spected to be there all Summer, and was 'lowing to come out here with her daddy. But seeing how things is going, it won't do. Mebbe Salem even won't be safe for 'em. It won't put you out any to see her and tell her?"

I trusted to the dusk to conceal my burning cheeks. I had supposed I had secured control of myself during my three years on the border. It would be impossible for any man who had looked into Patsy Dale's dark blue eyes to forget her; and we had been something more than friends. I promised Mrs. Davis I would do her errand, and hurried from the cabin.

The ride ahead of me suddenly became momentous. I was thrilled with the prospect of seeing her again; and I was afraid the interview would disturb me vastly. To be alone and arrange my jumbled thoughts I helped drive the horses into a small inclosure, well stockaded, and watched the boys coming through the clearing to drive the cattle into their stalls in several hollow sycamores. These natural shelters, once the openings were enlarged and protected with bars, made excellent pens for the domestic animals and fowls. I was still thinking about Patsy Dale and the time when her young life touched mine when the cabin doors were barred and it was time to sleep.

CHAPTER III

OVER THE MOUNTAINS

WHEN I opened my eyes a young man was surveying the clearing through a chink above the door. This morning vigilance was customary in every cabin along the frontier and revealed the settler's realization of the ever present danger. No wonder those first men grew to hate the dark forest and the cover

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it afforded the red raiders. A reconnaissance made through a peephole could at the best satisfy one that no stump in the clearing concealed an Indian.

It was with this unsatisfactory guarantee that the settler unbarred his door. He could never be sure that the fringe of the woods was not alive with the enemy. And yet young men fell in love and amorously sought their mates, and were married, and their neighbors made merry, and children were born. And always across the clearing lay the shadow of the tomahawk.

Now that I am older and the blood runs colder, and the frontier is pushed beyond the mountains, I often wonder what our town swains would do if they had to risk their scalps each time a sweetheart was visited!

The man at the door dropped back to the puncheon floor, announcing—

"All clear at my end."

A companion at the other end of the cabin made a similar report, and the door was opened. Two of the men, with their rifles ready, stepped outside and swiftly swung their gaze along the edge of the forest. The early morning mists obscured the vision somewhat. A bell tinkled just within the undergrowth. Instantly the fellows outside dropped behind stumps, while we inside removed the plugs from loopholes.

"All the cattle is in," murmured a youth to me, so young his first beard had barely sprouted. "Injun trick to git us out there."

Several minutes passed, then Davis loudly called from the fort:

"It's all right! Hodge's critter wa'n't fetched in last night."

Even as he spoke the cow emerged from the bushes.

Smoke began issuing from the cabin chimneys and the women came from the fort to warm up the remains of the pot-pies, to bake corn bread and prepare mush. The men scattered through the clearing. Some chopped down bushes which might mask a foe's stealthy advance, others cleared out logs which might serve as breastworks for the raiders.

Labor did not appeal to the four killers, and their part was done when they slipped into the forest, each taking a different course, and scouted for signs and bagged some game. As my business demanded an early departure I was not expected to participate in any of these precautions.

I saw that my horse had his feed and water and led him back to the cabin, and gave my weapons their daily overhauling. Mrs. Davis paused in her labors long enough to remind me of her message to Patricia Dale. I reassured her so earnestly that she turned from her corn bread baking in a flat pan before the open fire and stared at me rather intently. There was no dodging her keen eyes.

"See here," she exclaimed; "you've met Patsy already, I 'low."

I hesitated between the truth and a lie, and then nodded my head. She brushed a limp strand of hair from her face, and in so doing left a smut-streak across her nose, and half-closed her eyes while a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth.

"I can't say yet whether you're lucky, or just the opposite," she demurely remarked.

A loud call from the forest relieved my answering this insinuating remark, and I stepped outdoors to find the men leaving their work and the women leaving their cooking. "White man coming!" bawled a young man.

"Ain't any of the scouts," said Davis. "Better gather the children in. White man sure enough, but it may be one of the renegade breed. Surveyors from the Kanawha say Tavenor Ross is out with the reds ag'in."

There was no haste or confusion in preparing for this possible attack led by a white man. The children scuttled to their mothers; the men slowly fell back to fort and cabins. The fact that four Indian-haters were carefully scouting the woods satisfied us that no enemy could get very close without being fired upon. The white man called again. This time he was answered from two directions.

"It's all right," shouted Davis. "Ike Crabtree answered him. So did Lige Runner. Crabtree never would 'a' yipped till sure there wa'n't no Injun waiting to be shot down. Prob'ly some one from the Holston."

"Hooray!" howled a seventeen-year-old lad, who painted his face in addition to wearing Indian leggings. "It's Jesse Hughes!"

His endorsement of the passionate, reckless man evoked more enthusiasm from the younger men than from their elders. So implacable was Hughes in his hatred of the natives that he was incapable of any self-restraint. His participation in the massacre of the Bulltown families had made him a well-known character wherever Indian-fighters met.

Crabtree loved to kill Indians, but he always weighed his chances and never scorned an advantage. Hughes killed on sight, whether in a settlement or in the woods, whether the act brought one or a score of dusky avengers on his trail. Nor did it matter if the Indian be friendly to the whites and known to be perfectly harmless. His skin condemned him.

Although a master of woodcraft and possessing a knowledge of western Virginia equalled by few men, Hughes was never asked to lead a command of rangers sent to rescue prisoners, or punish a village. He was too irresponsible. He would imperil the lives of a score of friends bent on a surprize attack by firing upon the first savage he saw.

The young men saw in him the successful killer. Their elders preferred to travel the

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forests without him. His presence in a settlement once war came to the frontier, however, was always desirable, as in case of a fight he would do the enemy much damage.

When he rode from the forest the four scouts came with him; and there was no question as to their admiration of the fellow. Greetings were called out by men and women. He saw me mounted and some one told him of my journey. He rode up to me and warned me to be watchful as he had found tracks a few miles south of the mountain-trace I proposed following.

His errand at Howard's Creek was to secure a few men and attempt to cut off this band. Eager queries for news induced him to say he had just come from Clinch River, and that Captain William Russell, in charge of the rangers along the Clinch, had started Daniel Boone and Michael Stoner for the Falls of the Ohio to warn the surveyors along the river that the Indians were out and would soon be attacking the frontier and combing the Kentucky country clean.

With much gusto he added that three Cherokees had been killed recently at the head of the Clinch. The thoughtless, in unison with Hacker and his companions, cheered this announcement most lustily. The men with families looked very grave. Of Baby Kirst Hughes had seen no signs.

His report of Indian-signs near my route over the mountains influenced me to return to the cabin and check up my ammunition more carefully. I spread a double handful of small bullets on the table, running seventy to the pound, and let each slip through my fingers to make sure none was irregular. Only those which were round and smooth were returned to the pouch.

My flints and greased linen patches were examined a second time. An aged man, known as Uncle Dick, came in and watched me curiously, and grinned in approval of my caution. It was seldom a man reached his advanced age on the frontier. I had never heard Uncle Dick's last name, nor do I believe there was any one on the creek who had heard it.

According to rumor he had gone against some law in South Carolina and had fled to the frontier. Despite his many years he was sturdy and strong, but his failing eyesight made him dependent upon knife and ax. Much travel in wet weather had crippled him with rheumatism, and he remained close to whatever settlement he happened to visit.

"Fill the breast o' yer shirt with hunks o' corn cake, younker. Be sure yer ax is hitched so it won't be snagged from the loop when ye ride hellitiflicker through the bushes," he warned me.

I nodded, and he seated himself on a three-legged stool and whetted a long knife against one of the fireplace stones, and mumbled:

"Don't make no differ about me, but for the sake o' these younkers here such men as love killin' Injuns oughter keep clear o' the settlements an' do their stent on t'other side the Ohio. Old Cornstalk's powerful keen to git them fellers. When he hears they're here at the creek he's likely to strike quick an mighty pert. Wal, if they come an' I can make it hand-grips with 'em I 'low there'll be some new Injuns in the Happy Huntin'-grounds."

When I bid the people good-by and received their kindly wishes for a safe journey, Uncle Dick was still at the fireplace, trying to improve the razor-edge of his blade.

I RODE through the woods without spending any time in looking for signs. Runner and his mates had scouted a circle around the clearing in a thorough fashion, and I could spare my eyes until I reached the first slope of the mountains. When the path began to ascend and I was afforded a better view of the heavens, thunder-clouds were piling in sullen massiveness above the western horizon.

The heat was very oppressive. The dull rumble of thunder came across the valley behind. It was as much of a vibration as a sound, something to be felt as well as heard. The song-birds were keeping close to the thickets and fluttering about nervously. By the time I was well committed to the first rugged ascent, a yellowish gray wall filled the western sky. Across this the lightning played.

As the curtain of rain drove in toward the Greenbriar I knew that any savages lurking west of Howard's Creek would be bothered to keep their priming dry. No rain fell on my path, however, and at no time did I lose the early morning sun. On gaining a higher elevation I could see the storm was following the valley down to the headwaters of the Clinch.

I had not neglected Uncle Dick's advice in regard to provisions, and the front of my loose hunting-shirt held a bag of corn cakes and some cooked venison. On reaching the first slope I had watched carefully for the tracks Hughes had seen south of the trace, but found none.

There could be no question of Hughes' ability to read Indian-signs; and his warning recalled the Grisdols to my mind. These people—two brothers and two children—had their cabin in a hollow close by a tumbling brook and to one side of the trace. I planned to make a slight detour and pass a word with them and to warn them to be watchful.

The fact that Hughes had found signs near the mountains would indicate the Indians had planned a raid against some isolated home, and as there was no footing in the trace I followed, it might easily be that the enemy had entered lower down.

Along toward the noon hour I topped a ridge

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and decided I would halt and eat at the first spring or brook I came to. My horse, an old campaigner in wilderness work, pricked his ears as we began dipping down the gentle slope. I studied the path ahead and the timbered slopes on both sides to discover the cause of this attention.

The animal was intelligent. I knew it could be no wild creature as there was no suggestion of fear in the attentive ears. Dissatisfied at remaining in ignorance, I reined in to investigate more carefully. Almost at once the horse swung his head to the right and gazed curiously. On this side the space was bordered by a beech grove. Owing to the rank bush-growth lining the path little could be seen of the grove from any point below where I had halted until a brook, which cut the path, was reached.

I leaned forward and looked between the horse's ears and discovered a bear down in the hollow, nosing about for nuts and grubs on the bank of the brook. A bear was always acceptable meat to a settler, and I at once decided to stalk the brute and pack his carcass to the Grisdol cabin.

After the first moment he passed behind some trees, but as I continued to glimpse him I knew he had not taken alarm. I slid from my horse and started him down the trace, and then ducked into the grove and rapidly descended toward the brook. I had no fear of my horse losing himself, as he would make for the stream where I would join him within a few minutes.

As I flitted from tree to tree I repeatedly sighted the animal as he poked his nose about in search of ants or grubs, and yet when I reached a point within sixty or seventy-five yards of where he should have been feeding I could not locate him.

A half-formed suspicion popped into my mind from nowhere. My horse had shown no nervousness in drawing nearer to the bear. The bushes prevented my seeing the horse, but I could hear him as he quickened his pace to reach the tumbling brook. Now for a second I saw the bear again, and my suspicion grew stronger.

The brute impressed me as being very lean, whereas the season was enough advanced to have grown some fat on his bones. I was fairly startled next to behold the creature emerge from behind a tree and walk upright toward the opening made by the brook, cutting across the trace. Had I not been partly primed for the surprize I should have been astounded at my second discovery; the bear was armed with a gun.

Expecting to behold me on the horse when the animal reached the brook the fellow's only thought was to remain unseen by any one in the trace. He halted behind a tree, but in full view of me, and standing with his left side exposed to me. Had I the instincts of a killer I would have shot him forthwith, and as he was obviously stalking me, having discovered I was traveling over the trace, I would have been justified. As it was I whistled shrilly.

Like a flash the bearskin fell back and a painted Shawnee wheeled to face me. Even as he turned his smooth-bore banged away and half a dozen buckshot rained through the branches over my head. He was slipping behind the tree when I fired.

He went down with a foot and part of his leg exposed. Controlling an impulse to close in I reloaded, taking great care in wrapping the greased patch about the bullet. I believed I had done for him, but to make sure I sent another pellet through the exposed foot. It twitched, as a dead limb will do, but without muscular reaction. Reloading and circling warily to avoid being taken by surprize by any of his companions I reached the beech. My first shot had caught him through the base of the neck, killing instantly.

He wore a necklace of bear's claws and was hideously painted. He had the snake totem on his chest and was nude except for his breech-clout and moccasins. Fastened to his clout were four awful exhibits of his predaceous success—four scalps. One was gray, another streaked with gray, and two—oh, the pity of it—were soft and long.

I removed them and placed them in the roll of buckskin that I carried for moccasin-patches. And my heart being hardened, I scalped the murderer with never a qualm. No warning was longer needed at the Grisdol cabin. The Indians had struck.

Furtively scanning the grove, I stole to the trace where my horse stood fetlock-deep in the brook. The dead warrior had known of my coming, or of some one's coming, and had had time to masquerade as a bear. He had thought to catch his victim off his guard.

The four scalps proved the raiders were out in numbers, for a small party would not venture so far east. But the dead warrior's attempt to ambush me in a bearskin also proved he was working alone for the time being. Yet gunshots carry far, and I might expect the Shawnees to be swarming into the hollow at any moment.

MOUNTING my horse, I turned north, left of the trace, and picked a course where no trail ran, and from which I could occasionally catch a glimpse of the path some fifty feet below. I discovered no signs of the enemy, and there was no way of telling whether they were ahead or behind me. That they must have heard the roar of the smooth-bore and the whip-like crack of my Deckhard was not to be doubted. Nor would they fail

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to guess the truth, inasmuch as the rifle had spoken last.

It became very difficult to keep along the side of the slope and I dismounted and led the horse. The prolonged howl of a wolf sounded behind. My horse was greatly afraid of wolves, yet he did not draw back and display nervousness. I increased my pace, then halted and half-raised my rifle as there came a shuffling of feet above me, accompanied by a tiny avalanche of forest mold and rotten chestnuts. I rested the rifle over the saddle and endeavored to peer through the tangle of beech and inferior growth which masked the flank of the slope.

The sliding, shuffling sound continued with no attempt at concealment that I could discover; and yet there was nothing to shoot at. Suddenly the noise ceased. I was still staring toward the spot where it had last sounded when a calm voice behind me called out—

"They're after you."

It was Shelby Cousin, with the hate of the border making his young face very hard and cruel.

"I've been scouting 'em," he informed me. "I seen you take to the side o' this ridge. I seen 'em streamin' down the trace. They picked up your trail mighty smart. Now they're scattered all along behind you."

I opened the roll of buckskin and disclosed the terrible trophies. He straightened and threw his head back, and for a moment stood with his eyes closed, his slight figure trembling violently. Then he fiercely whispered—

"How'd you git these from the devils?"

There was an expectant glare in his gaze. I showed him the hair of the Shawnee.

"Good! Good!" he repeated exultingly as he gloated over the repulsive thing. Then gloomily:

"But why couldn't I 'a' took it? Luck's been ag'in' me for days. Found a burned cabin after I quit you on the Cheat, an' 'lowed to ambush the party when they made for the Ohio. 'Stead o' goin' to their villages they fooled me by strikin' across to here. Now they've made this kill! Who be they?"

"The Grisdols. Only a short distance from here. Two men and the two children. No women. I knew them. I must go there and bury them and these scalps."

"I'll help," he mumbled. "I ain't heard no discovery-yell yet. They're still huntin' for your signs along this ridge." Trailing his double-barrel rifle, he took the lead and began a diagonal descent to the trace I had abandoned. I murmured a protest, but he assured me:

"They're all behind us. We can make quicker time in the trace. They'll hop onto your trail sure's shootin'. Speed is what we hanker for."

His woodcraft was remarkable. He seemed to possess the gift of seeing that which was concealed. With a glance he would observe land formations and the nature of the growth, and confidently circle a heavy grove and tell me what would be the nature of the traveling beyond, and whether wet or dry.

"We could slide down into the trace in a minute any time, but I don't want to take to it till we round the bend ahead; then we'll be out o' sight o' the reds strung along the ridge."

He had halted as he explained this and I was almost abreast of him, and he startled me by whipping up his rifle and firing. As the shot rang out he rejoiced—

"One!"

I had heard nothing, seen nothing, and yet he had both heard and seen, and had made his kill.

"No use coverin' up any longer," he said. "They're closin' in. Make for the trace shortest way. Hold back once you hit it for me to come up. There's not more'n two or three close at hand, but the whole kit an' b'ilin' know we're here."

The spiteful *spang* of his rifle barely interrupted the woods life close about us. Only for a moment did the squirrels cease their chatter. A grouse drummed away in alarm, but only for a short flight. No cries of rage, nor war-whoops, warned that the enemy were closing in on us. Had I been new to the border I should have disbelieved my companion's statement. Leading the horse, I started down the bank while Cousin climbed higher.

It was not until my horse slid down a ten-foot bank that I heard a hostile sound—the rush of many feet through last year's dead leaves. I heard the Deckhard fired once, and instantly the side of the ridge was as quiet as a death-chamber. Then came the scream of a panther, Cousin's way of announcing a kill.

They must have attempted rushing him, thinking his rifle was empty; for he fired again, and once more gave voice to his war-cry. Then the old, eternal quiet of the forest dropped back in place. Until I heard a Shawnee scalp-cry I could rest easy as to my companion. I slipped into the trace and mounted, and pushed ahead.

The Indians were abreast of me and there was the danger of their cutting into the trace ahead. That they had not followed at my heels made me believe they were concentrating all their energies on making a surround and killing, or capturing their much feared enemy. They would prefer to dance Cousin's scalp than to dance a dozen of men of my caliber.

There were no more shots up the ridge, and I found it hard to decide just what gait I should permit my horse to take. I could not leave the boy behind, nor did I care to risk being intercepted. I was worrying my mind into a fine stew over this point when the bushes

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stirred ahead. I dropped to the ground behind the horse, but it was young Cousin. He motioned for me to hurry.

"You dodged them!" I said.

"Black Hoof's band. They're hard to dodge," he whispered, striding rapidly along and swinging his head from side to side. "How far to the Grisdol cabin?"

"Two miles."

"Then ride for it. I'll run at your stirrup. We'll need that cabin if it ain't been burned. I 'low it'll be a close race."

There was no sign of pursuit. I was no novice in Indian warfare, but in this instance I scarcely believed the Shawnees would draw near enough to make the chase interesting. So far as I could observe Cousin had succeeded in stealing away from them, and there was no Indian who could overtake him, especially if he ran at my stirrup.

"They've took four sculps on this side the valley," he murmured as he loped along at my side. "I bagged three on 'em. You fetched one. Black Hoof is too big a chief to call it quits. He's back there leadin' the chase. So I 'low it'll be close."

A curious little thrill chilled my spine. Catahecassa, or Black Hoof, was one of the most redoubtable and resourceful savages to be found in the Shawnee nation. If below Cornstalk's intellectual plane he made up for much of any such discrepancy by his fiery courage and deep cunning.

The long-drawn howl of a wolf sounded up the slope on our left and was soon answered by a similar call directly in our rear. For a third time the signal menaced us, on our right and at a considerable distance.

"They're still scoutin' the ridge for me," murmured Cousin, his lean face turning to the left. "The heft of 'em are comin' along the trace behind us. Those over to the right are hustlin' to find out what's up. We must git along faster!"

My mount responded eagerly, for he sensed the danger. And it was wonderful to observe how Cousin kept up, with one hand on my stirrup, the other holding the rifle. We were well beyond the brook where I shot my Shawnee, and within half a mile or less of the Grisdol cabin, when our flight was interrupted for a few moments by the behavior of my horse.

It was just as we turned from the main trace to strike into the path leading to the cabin that the animal bolted sidewise, crowding Cousin deep into the bushes. I reined in and stared down an a terrible sight—that of the four Grisdols. They lay in the path, head to head, in the form of a cross. I felt my stirrup shake as Cousin's hand rested on it. He gave a little gasping sob and whispered—

"How near to the cabin now?"

"Less than half a mile," I told him as I soothed my horse and permitted him to pick his way around the dead.

ONCE more we were off, but now Cousin ran behind, for the way was winding and narrow, and at places the overhanging boughs tried to brush me from the saddle.

There was no need of glancing back to make sure my companion was keeping up, for his impatient voice repeatedly urged me to make greater speed.

"If the cabin ain't standin' we've got to have 'nough of a lead to let us lose 'em in the woods," he reminded.

The path completed a detour of some tangled blackberry bushes and ended in a natural opening, well grassed.

"There it is! The roof is partly burned!" I encouraged.

"The walls stand. The door's in place. Faster!"

Across the opening we raced. From the woods behind arose a ferocious yelling. The Shawnee were confident they had driven us into a trap. We flashed by two dead cows and some butchered hogs, and as yet I had not seen an Indian except the one masked in a bear's pelt. The cabin roof was burned through at the front end. The door was partly open and uninjured.

It was simple reasoning to reconstruct the tragedy even while we hastened to shelter. The family had offered resistance, but had been thrown into a panic at the first danger from fire. Then it was quickly over. Doubtless there had been something of a parley with the usual promise of life if they came out. The fire crackled overhead, the victims opened the door.

Cousin said they had been conducted to the main trace before being slaughtered. As I leaped from my horse a fringe of savages broke from cover and began shooting. Cousin dropped the foremost of them. I led the horse inside the cabin and my companion closed and barred the door.

The interior of the place mutely related the tragic story. It is the homely background of a crime that accents the terrible. On the table was the breakfast of the family, scarcely touched. They had been surprized when just about to eat. An overturned stool told how one of the men had leaped to bar the door at the first alarm. I spied through a peephole but could see nothing of our foes. A low cry from Cousin alarmed me. He was overcome at the sight of a small apron.

"I wish I'd stuck to the open," he whispered. "The air o' this place chokes me."

"If we can stand them off till night we can send the horse galloping toward the woods to draw their fire. Then we can run for it."

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"There won't be no darkness tonight," morosely replied Cousin. "They'll make big fires. They'll try to burn us out. We're well forted till they git the roof blazin' ag'in. We'll 'low to stick here s'long we can. They won't dare to hang round too long."

He took a big kettle from the fireplace and thrust it through the hole in the roof. Bullets whistled overhead, with an occasional *whang* as a piece of lead hit the kettle and ricocheted. After the first volley the Indians refused to waste their ammunition, either realizing it was useless, or suspecting the kettle was some kind of a trick.

"I 'lowed they'd git tired," muttered Cousins, sticking the top of his head into the kettle and lifting the edge a crack so he could scrutinize the forest. After a minute of silence his muffled voice called down to me:

"Had a notion that cow we passed nearest the woods was dead. Try a shot that'll just graze the rump."

I fired and a Shawnee began rolling toward the bushes. The iron kettle rattled to the ground, and young Cousin, with head and shoulders thrust through the roof, discharged both barrels of his rifle. The Indian stopped rolling. I was amazed that Black Hoof's men had not instantly fired a volley. I exclaimed as much as he dropped to the floor.

"Here she comes!" he cried as the lead began plunking into the thick logs. "If they keep it up we can dig quite a lot o' lead out the timbers. It took 'em by surprize to see me comin' through the roof, an' it surprized 'em more to see two shoots comin' out of a gun that hadn't been reloaded. Mighty few double barrels out here. Huh! I 'low somethin' cur'ous is goin' to happen."

I could discern nothing to warrant this prophecy. No Indians were to be seen. Cousin called my attention to the sound of their tomahawks. I had heard it before he spoke, but I had been so intent in using my eyes that I had forgotten to interpret what my ears were trying to tell me. There was nothing to do but wait.

Cousin discovered the horse had drunk what water there had happened to be in the bucket, leaving us scarcely a drop. Half an hour of waiting seemed half a day; then something began emerging from the woods. It resolved itself into a barrier of green boughs, measuring some fifteen feet in length and ten feet in height.

Its approach was slow. The noise of the axes was explained. The Indians had chopped saplings and had made a frame and filled it with boughs. Behind it was a number of warriors. About half-way across the clearing were half a dozen long logs scattered about.

"They're thinkin' to make them logs an' while hid by their boughs yank 'em together to make a breastwork. Then they'll pepper us while 'nother party rushes in close. New party will pelt us while the first makes a run to git ag'in' the walls where we can't damage 'em from the loopholes. That Black Hoof is a devil for thinkin' up tricks."

I fired at the green mass. Cousin rebuked me, saying:

"Don't waste lead. There's three braves with long poles to keep the contraption from fallin' backward. They're on their feet, but keepin' low as possible. There's t'others pushin' the bottom along. There's t'others huggin' the ground. You'll notice the ends an' middle o' the top stick up right pert, but between the middle an' each end the boughs sort o' sag down. If the middle pole can be put out o' business I 'low the weight of it will make it cave in. Loaded? Then don't shoot less you see somethin'."

With this warning he fired at the middle of the screen, and the middle support developed a weakness, indicating he had wounded the poleman. He fired again, and the whole affair began to collapse, and a dozen warriors were uncovered. These raced for the woods, two of them dragging a wounded or dead man.

For a few seconds I was incapable of moving a muscle. I was much like a boy trying to shoot his first buck. Or perhaps it was the very abundance of targets that made me behave so foolishly. Cousin screamed in rage. My bonds snapped, and I fired. If I scored a hit it was only to wound, for none of the fleeing foe lessened their speed.

"—— poor fiddlin'!" groaned Cousin, eyeing me malevolently.

"I don't know what was the matter with me. Something seemed to hold me paralyzed. Couldn't move a finger until you yelled."

"Better luck next time," he growled, his resentment passing away.

He loaded and stood his rifle against the logs and began spying from the rear of the cabin. Whenever he glanced at the apron his eyes would close for a moment. No women had lived there. One of the Grisdols, the father of the two children, had brought it as a reminder of his dead wife. Cousin's great fight was not against the red besiegers, but against his emotions. I knew he was thinking of his sister.

"Come here!" I sharply called. "They want a pow-wow. One's waving a green bough."

COUSIN climbed to the hole in the roof, holding his rifle out of sight by the muzzle. He yelled in Shawnee for the man to advance alone. The warrior strode forward, the token of peace held high. So far as I could see he did not have even a knife in his belt. Overhead Cousin's rifle cracked and the Indian went down with never a kick.

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"Good God! You've fired on a flag of truce, after agreeing to receive it!" I raged.

He stood beside me, a crooked smile on his set face, his eyes gleaming with triumph, his shapely head tilted to enjoy every note of the horrible anger now welling from the forest. "You fired——"

"I 'low I did," he chuckled. Then with awful intentness, "But the folks who lived here an' was happy didn't fire on the Injun fetchin' 'em a bundle o' peace-talk. They believed the Injuns meant it. Do you reckon I treated that dog any worse then the Shawnees treated my father and mother and little sister ten years ago? If you don't 'low that, just keep shet. When a Injun sends you a flag o' truce you want to tie your scalp down, or it'll blow off."

The chorus of howls in the forest suddenly ceased, then were succeeded by sharp yelps of joy. Cousin stared at me in bewilderment. Darting to the back of the cabin, he peered through a chink. "Come here," he softly commanded. I joined him and took his place at the peephole. There was a haze of smoke in the eastern sky.

"That's why Black Hoof an' his men are hangin' round here," he sighed. "He sent a small band farther east. They've made a kill. That's a burnin' over there."

"That would be Edgely's cabin," I decided. "But they moved back to Dunlap's Creek three months ago."

"Thank God for that!" he exclaimed. "But we'll have more Injuns round us mighty soon. I wish it was dark."

"They've stopped their yowling. Look out for fresh deviltry!"

He nodded and walked to the front of the cabin. The horse neighed shrilly. The call was repeated in the forest. The Indians continued silent. I heard it first; that is to recognize it. For I had heard it the day before. The voice of a man shouting fretfully, much as an angry child complains. Cousin understood it when a whimpering note was added.

"Baby Kirst!" he softly cried. "Black Hoof will 'low his medicine is mighty weak. Baby's out there an' in a bad frame o' mind. Somethin' is goin' ag'in, the grain. It's good medicine for us that he wandered up this way."

I began sketching the happenings at Howard's Creek, but before I could finish the bushes on the hem of the woods were violently agitated and Baby Kirst rode into the clearing, his horse in a lather. When he beheld the dead cows and hogs he yelled like a madman and plucked his heavy ax from his belt, and turned back to the woods. He disappeared with a crash, his hoarse voice shouting unintelligible things."

"Now you can go," quietly said Cousin as he unbarred the door. "Be keerful o' the Injuns to the east. They'll be a small band. I 'low I'll foller Kirst. If he don't drive 'em too fast there oughter be good huntin' for me."

That night I rode into the Greenwood clearing on Dunlap's Creek without having seen any Indians along the way.

CHAPTER IV

I REPORT TO MY SUPERIORS

A NIGHT at the Greenwood cabin and I resumed my journey to Salem on the Roanoke. Near this hamlet lived Colonel Andrew Lewis, to whom I was to report before carrying or forwarding Doctor Connolly's dispatches to Governor Dunmore. The trip was free from any incidents and seemed exceedingly tame after the stress of over-mountain travel. All the settlers I talked with were very anxious to know the true conditions along the border.

As I pressed on and found the cabins more thickly strewn along the various waters I was impressed by the belief of many that the Cherokees would join the Ohio tribes before the war ended. One would expect to find this apprehension to be the keenest where the danger would be the greatest. But not so. Whenever I related how Isaac Crabtree had murdered Cherokee Billy, brother of the powerful Oconostota, the pessimists were positive that the Cherokee nation would lay down a red path.

Notwithstanding these natural fears the war remained popular with practically all the men with whom I talked. Various companies were being formed, and militia captains, to make sure of seeing active service, were not punctilious as to where and by what means they secured their men. There was much ill-natured bickering over this rivalry, with several matters assuming such proportions that only Colonel Lewis could straighten them out.

The war was popular because the people realized a farther western expansion would be impossible until the Indians had been crowded back and firmly held behind the Ohio. Anything short of a permanent elimination of the red menace was cried down.

Much resentment was felt against the hotheads in Pennsylvania for openly accusing the Virginians of inciting the war to establish their land claims. It was widely known that the Pennsylvania *Gazette* had published charges against Doctor Connolly to the effect that his agents, acting under his orders, had fired on friendly Shawnees who were escorting white traders into Fort Pitt. Among these settlers east of the mountains the common complaint was about the scarcity of powder and lead.

When within a few miles of my destination I came upon a group of settlers who were gathered about a travel-stained stranger. For the first time since leaving Dunlap's Creek I found

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myself of second importance. This man was tanned by the weather to a deep copper color and wore a black cloth around his head in place of a cap.

I halted on the edge of the group and waited for him to finish his narrative which must have been of lively interest if the rapt attention of the men and women was any gage.

"—and using the ax I jumped over his body, got to the horse and rode away," his deep voice concluded. He spoke with a palpable effort and almost with a sing-song intonation.

I dismounted and pressed forward, and told him—

"You talk like an Indian."

"God's marcy, young sir!" cried an old dame. "An', please sweet grace, why shouldn't he? Isn't he Johnny Ward, took by the Injuns when a boy, an' just managed to scoot free of 'em?"

The man slowly looked me over, his face as immovable as any Shawnee chief's. Then with the slightest of hesitation between each two words he calmly informed me:

"Escaped as the white woman says. Named John Ward. Indian name, Red Arrow. Now I am back with my people. Now I am John Ward again. I talk bad. I talked with Indians most the time all these years. With my old friends I will grow to talk better."

I congratulated him on his return to civilization. Many a man holding a high place in the colony's government and in the affection of the people had been held in captivity; but few were the men who returned after spending so many years with the Indians. In that respect Ward's case was unusual.

"Your talk sounds all right to us," said one of the men. "Mayhap you l'arned some things about the red hellions that'll help our boys to give 'em pepper."

"I can lead you to their towns by the shortest trails. I can lead you to their new towns that white men can not find quick," he replied, after a few moments' pause, just as an Indian would wait before answering a question.

Young Cousin flashed into my mind, and I asked Ward:

"Do you know of a white woman—she would be nineteen years old now—named Cousin? She was captured by Shawnees at Keeney's Knob ten years ago."

For half a minute I was doubtful if he understood my query. Then he shook his head. I was disappointed as it seemed to be an excellent chance to learn whether the girl be dead or alive. Still talking in his peculiar, halting way, he said:

"She, the white woman, was killed, probably. If not that she would be taken to Detroit and sold. Now married and living on a Canada farm, probably. Whites taken prisoners were not let to see each other. No whites were ever kept in the village where I lived."

"What village were you kept in?"

"First in Lower Shawnee Town. Then in more towns. As I grew old they took me to the towns farthest from the Ohio. Then came a time when I went where I pleased, but they never took me on their war-paths south the Ohio."

By this time the country folk began to remember that I, too, was a newcomer, and should have much information or gossip. They turned from Ward and plied me with questions. I briefly recited for the twentieth time since leaving Dunlap's Creek the conditions west of the mountains.

Detailed cross-examination brought forth the happenings at Howard's Creek and the murder of the four Grisdols, and the firing of the Edgely cabin. When I said that Black Hoof was in command of the Grisdol raiders my audience displayed nervousness, and more than one glance was cast toward the west. The effect on Ward was pronounced, also. Rising, he asked:

"Catahecassa led that path? I must be going. It was from his band I escaped. His warriors followed me. I will go to the east before camping for the night."

"He'll never dare come east of the mountains!" loudly declared one of the men.

Ward's face was inscrutable as he walked to his horse. As he vaulted into the saddle he remarked—

"Black Hoof has a long arm."

So it happened that John Ward, the returned captive, and I finished the distance to Salem. Temptation assailed me as we reached the edge of the settlement. I had planned all the time to finish my business with Colonel Lewis at his home at Richfield. I had planned this even after learning from Mrs. Davis of the Dales' presence in Salem.

Now, of a sudden, it seemed that I must hunt them up and look on Patricia once more. But Colonel Lewis was waiting for me. I had endured three years without a glimpse of the girl; and leaving Ward to ride on and relate his experience to the Salem people I skirted the town and pressed on to Richfield.

Arriving at the Lewis home I was informed by a colored man that the colonel was not at the house, but somewhere about the grounds.

"An' please goodness, massa, I's gwine to fotch him in two shakes of a houn' dawg's tail," he told me.

I threw myself on the grass and waited. Either the servant's powers of "fotching" had been exaggerated, or else the colonel was quite indifferent to my arrival. Nearly an hour passed before my meditations were interrupted.

THIS was not my first visit to Richfield to report to the colonel, but I felt no better acquainted at the last meeting than at the first. There was a certain reserve in his manner which held folks at arm's

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length. This impression of aloofness was increased by his personal appearance. His tall figure and stern dark eyes made for austerity.

In military affairs he was said to be overstrict in discipline; this from those who had served under him in former wars. Yet he stood very high in the esteem of the county militia and his superiors. Perhaps his severe mien was the natural result of a life filled with stormy experiences. From early manhood he had been employed in fighting the Indians.

He was a captain of militia at the age of twenty-two. Twelve years later he was a major, serving under Colonel George Washington. He was seriously wounded at Fort Necessity. He would have played a prominent part in Braddock's first and last Indian battle had he not been detailed to complete a chain of frontier forts. He was in the disastrous Sandy Creek expedition the year following Braddock's defeat.

In 1758 he was an officer under Forbes, and was one of those captured with Grant's detachment. He escaped the stake only to be held a prisoner in Montreal. Later he led a force against the Cherokees; and in Pontiac's War he commanded two hundred and fifty riflemen under Colonel Bouquet. Now he was picked to command one of the two armies that Governor Dunmore proposed to send against the Indian towns above the Ohio.

Among the Indians the name of Lewis stood very high. The natives knew the colonel to be the son of that John Lewis who was long famed as an Indian fighter. It was commonly believed by red and white, and I have no reason to doubt the truth of it, that it was John Lewis who introduced red clover to America.

Whether he did or did not, the Ohio Indians credited him with planting the first seed and said the color resulted from the blood of the red men he had slain. William and Charles Lewis, the colonel's brothers, also were noted border men. Charles undoubtedly ranked as high for courage and astuteness as any frontiersman in Virginia.

The colored man at last turned the corner of the house. Behind him, and not yet in sight, was the colonel, and he was not alone for I could hear his grave voice addressing some companion.

"De c'unel dat stubbon I jes' have to talk mighty plain 'fore I could make him pudge erlong," proudly whispered the servant as he passed me.

I sprang to my feet and Colonel Lewis and his Excellency, John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, our royal governor, leisurely strolled into view.

Colonel Lewis wore no wig and was smoking a pipe, of which he was inordinately fond. It was characteristic of him to be more democratic and careless in personal presentment when with his superiors than when meeting the rough and ready people of the border.

Nor was Governor Dunmore given to set forms. He was forty-two years of age and in his prime, a man among men. He could be most democratic, and on this day there was none of the town beau's fastidiousness in his dress. Yet his wig and his coat were a mode in themselves while his shoe, knee and stock buckles were of gold. Ultra-genteel young bucks would have had such buckles set with brilliants, that they might twinkle and glitter at every mincing step.

His Excellency walked with a man's stride and gave the impression of being careless in dress, whereas, in fact, he always was perfect in his points. He dominated his attire and left you scarcely conscious of it. The two of them had been discussing something with great earnestness for as they drew near me the colonel gestured with his pipe-stem, and his Excellency pushed back his wig and appeared inclined to disagree.

"——, man! I tell you it's their cursed provincial jealousy. They malign the man."

"Your Excellency, I am not the judge," Colonel Lewis calmly replied. "I simply repeat what I hear, and suggest how it may be disastrous to the campaign."

"Jealousy and slander!" heatedly declared the governor. Then his lively gaze rested on me. He frowned, as if trying to remember, then smiled with that graciousness he could so charmingly display when he deemed it worth while and said:

"I've been keeping you from your guest, colonel. He looks brown and lean enough to have traveled far and to have brought a pretty earful. And —— if I don't know the face and ought to be calling him by name."

Colonel Lewis advanced a few steps and bowed slightly, and refreshed the governor's recollection by saying:

"He is Basdel Morris, your Excellency. Of Prince William County originally. Before your Excellency came to Virginia he came out here to act as scout and messenger between us and Fort Pitt."

"Fort Dunmore," coldly corrected the governor, giving the name bestowed in honor of his earldom. Then with a genial smile:

"I remember Mr. Morris distinctly. He has brought papers to me. I vow but he should have a good budget of news. If we could retire to the shade and escape this cursed heat——"

"Inside, inside," bruskly interrupted the colonel, and he waved us through the door with his pipe-stem. "We'll find it cool in there."

And we did; and very pleasant too, and with many little comforts for those who wish to be indolent, such as foot-rests, and low tables for holding decanter and glasses and a sheaf of long pipes and some of Virginia's superb tobacco.

"No ceremony here, Mr. Morris. Sit down,

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man. We will play his lordship is traveling in disguise."

"Forsooth! He has that which we are hungry to receive! It's more fit we should stand while he takes his ease," gaily exclaimed his Excellency. And he removed his wig and mopped his cropped poll and sipped appreciatively of the tall glass a soft-footed servant placed at his elbow.

This was a most pleasing trait about his Excellency, and one which in happier times should have endeared him even to people who have small use for earls. He could make the young or diffident man feel more at home than could the democratic and autocracy-hating Andrew Lewis. Nor was it any affectation; for we were soon to learn he could keep up with hardy borderers on long forest marches, and at that, proceed afoot and carry his own blanket and equipment like any backwoods volunteer.

COLONEL LEWIS shot a glance at me and then at the governor, and I verily believed his dark eyes were laughing at one of us. Surely not at me, for I was too insignificant. I obtained an inkling as to the cause of his cynical amusement when he said:

"Young Mr. Morris, while not forest-bred, has lived long enough in the woods as to make him blunt of tongue. Would your Excellency prefer that he make a verbal report to me and and that I reduce it to writing for your consideration?"

"After what the Quakers have said I find my skin to be very thick except when it comes to something touching my personal honor," coldly replied the governor. "Let the man tell what he will. We want the truth."

Until this moment I had barely opened my mouth. Now I produced the dispatches committed to my care by Doctor Connolly. In presenting these to Governor Dunmore I remained standing, waiting to be dismissed.

His Excellency, however, made no move to open and read his dispatches, but fell to staring at me speculatively. Finally he said—

"Let's have the personal side—the things you observed on your journey back here." And he motioned for me to be seated.

I told them of Bald Eagle's murder, and his Excellency exhibited hot anger, and broke in on my recital long enough to exclaim:

"—— their black hearts! I drove John Ryan out of the country for murdering on the Cheat, Ohio, and the Monongahela. I've had others arrested, and their crazy neighbors have released them. I offer rewards for still others, and they come and go unmolested!"

"Yes, it's unfortunate that some of our border men are as murderous as the Indians," quietly agreed Colonel Lewis. His Excellency subsided and nodded for me to continue.

I next spoke of young Shelby Cousin, and the colonel's eyes grew hard as I related the youth's lament over his little sister, and, in his behalf, urged that some effort be made to ascertain the girl's fate. The governor wrinkled his nose and brows in an effort to remember something. Then he said:

"I knew the name was familiar. I've sent word to Connolly to seek traces of the girl through the different traders. The war has closed that line of inquiry, I fear, as the traders have come in, or have been slaughtered. Very sad case. Very sad. The young man should go to England to begin life anew and learn to forget. I will arrange it for him."

"He would die before he would quit the woods, your Excellency," said the colonel. "If he did consent and did go to England he would die of homesickness inside of ten days. Either that, or he would try to swim back."

"Rather a poor opinion of England's charms," remarked the governor.

When I took up the general scarcity of powder and lead and described how handicapped the settlers were by the lack of these vital necessities, it was Colonel Lewis' turn to show the most feeling.

His anger was almost passionate, and none the less impressive because he held it in check. Staring wide-eyed at the governor he concluded his outburst by demanding—

"What about it, your Excellency?"

"What about it? Why, that's something to ask of the house of burgesses, wound all up in their —— red tape. His gracious Majesty suggested in sixty-three that insomuch as the colonies implored England's aid against the French and Indians they should contribute something toward the cost of their defense in that war. Methinks they have taken the suggestion as an affront."

"The French War is ten years old. It was fought so that England might gain Canada. Virginia is still a royal province and her people need powder and lead," the colonel replied. Perhaps he stressed "still" a bit. At least the governor's gaze dropped and concealed any impression he might have received.

The governor drummed his fingers on the low liquor-stand, then lifted his head and stated:

"This war will never be won by isolated groups of settlers fighting on the defensive along the many creeks and rivers. The decisive blow will be struck by the two armies soon to take the field. There will be plenty of powder for the men I lead and the men you are to lead. As to the back-country settlements, the house of burgesses should have provided for them. His Majesty is eager to aid all his subjects, but there's scant policy in serving our powder and balls to be husbanded along the western slope of the Alleghanies and perhaps later used against England's soldiers."

Colonel Lewis dropped his pipe and stared

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wrathfully at his noble guest. With an effort he restrained his temper and rejoined—

"The talk seems to touch upon some war other than that with the Ohio tribes."

His Excellency at once was all smiles and graciousness. Leaning forward and placing a hand on the colonel's knee, he earnestly declared:

"The conversation has wandered, foolishly on my part, I admit. I have lacked in tact, but the first fault I swear is due to the attitude of the burgesses in neglecting to take proper measures for defending the frontier. Before England can send sufficient supplies to Virginia this war will have ended. There is plenty of powder at Williamsburg. Why doesn't the house of burgesses send it to the border?"

"There is but a small store at the most, your Excellency."

"But why retain it when it is needed elsewhere?"

"That is hardly a question I can answer," was the stiff reply. Then with a flash of heat:

"It's a —— shame! We repeatedly urge those families to stick, not to come off their creeks until they've laid by their corn and harvested their oats; and they are denied the simple means of defending their lives. Whether the burgesses or the royal governor be at fault the fact remains that the settlers pay in blood and anguish."

"If there is any powder at Williamsburg or Norfolk that I can lay hands to, it shall go over the mountains. At least the royal governor will prove his hands are clean," solemnly declared his Excellency.

"I'll warrant that Pennsylvania has traded enough guns and powder to the Shawnees and Mingos," moodily observed the colonel.

"There's too much talk in Williamsburg over peoples' rights, and not enough concern for peoples' lives," declared his Excellency. "It would be a good thing if the house of burgesses could be locked up in a fort and made to repel an Indian attack."

"Well, well," sighed the colonel, "we'll never lick the Ohio tribes with proclamations and empty hands."

"By gad, sir! We'll whip them with powder and lead! I've set myself to the task of crushing the Indian power. It shall be done!"

THEY settled back and signaled for me to resume my narrative. When I mentioned Crabtree and the other killers both the governor and the colonel expressed a wish that the Indians might catch them, or else scare them from the border. I closed my story by speaking of John Ward, the returned captive. The military instinct of both my hearers was instantly aroused; for here was a source of inside information our spies could not hope to provide.

"Find that man and send him here," ordered the governor. "But before you go tell us something of conditions about Fort Dunmore. You seem to have skipped that."

This was what I had expected, and I did not relish the task. Had I been talking alone with Colonel Lewis it would have been the first topic I had touched upon.

"Your Excellency has Doctor Connolly's dispatches. Doubtless they will give you much more than I can," I faltered.

"There isn't any danger of your duplicating Doctor Connolly's information," said his Excellency sharply.

"His Excellency desires to learn those odds and ends which wouldn't be included in an official report, but which may throw some light on the whole situation," added the colonel, his gaze resting on me very insistently. And somehow I knew he wanted me to talk, and to speak plainly.

If I reported according to my sense of duty I feared I was in for an unpleasant experience with his Excellency. If I would ever receive any favors from him it would be because I kept my mouth shut and steered clear of dangerous ground. The situation at Pitt, however, had offended me; and now that I must speak I grew reckless and decided to speak frankly.

"Arthur St. Clair, representing the Pennsylvania proprietors, together with other eminent men in that colony, publicly declared that your Excellency is in partnership with Doctor Connolly in various land-deals," I began.

"Doctor Connolly has acted as my agent, just as his uncle, Michael Croghan, has acted for Colonel George Washington," easily remarked his Excellency.

"Croghan repudiates the acts of Connolly," I said.

Dunmore frowned and spoke wide of the mark when he said:

"What St. Clair and his friends see fit to believe scarcely constitutes facts. But go on."

"They also say that this war with the Shawnees is being hurried on for the purpose of establishing our boundary-claims and making good our titles to grants under Virginia patents."

"Scarcely news. They've been howling that ever since last April," growled Lewis.

"I've been absent some months. I have no way of knowing what you've heard, or haven't heard. I'm afraid I have nothing new in the way of facts or gossip," I said, and my face flushed.

Governor Dunmore laughed softly and good-naturedly nodded for me to continue. I said:

"It is commonly believed in Pennsylvania that Connolly's circular letter to our frontier was meant to precipitate a war so that he might cover up the costs of rebuilding Fort Pitt. It is said on all sides that the commandant fears the house of burgesses will repudiate his expenditures even after your Excellency has endorsed them—providing there is no war."

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The governor's face colored, but his voice was quiet as he said:

"Connolly may be a fool in many things, but he is right about the house of burgesses. There isn't any doubt as to their repudiating anything which looks like a benefit to our frontier."

"Your Excellency, I can scarcely agree to that," cut in Colonel Lewis. It was the second time their counter-views had struck out sparks.

Both remained silent for half a minute, each, I have no doubt, controlling an impulse to explode. Relations between the colonies and England resembled an open powder-keg. With a bow that might indicate he desired to avoid a dangerous subject the governor shifted the conversation by remarking:

"After all, it doesn't matter what Pennsylvania thinks, so long as we know her interests are hostile to Virginia's. I am governor of Virginia. I will serve her interests, and by gad! if the Quakers don't like our way they can chew their thumbs."

"We are one in that!" heartily cried the colonel.

Governor Dunmore frowned down at his gold shoe-buckles and wearily said:

"They say I want war. But the Williamsburg paper has insisted on this war since last March. Truth is, the border wants the war. And let me confess to you, Colonel Lewis, that the Earl of Dartmouth, as Secretary of State for the colonies, will express his Majesty's great displeasure to me before this war is over."

"England does not want this campaign to go through. Taking the position I have means I will meet with disfavor and criticism at home."

Turning to me, he querulously complained.

"And it's you people along the border who make the war necessary. It's the horrible massacres of harmless Indians that brought the trouble upon me."

This was grossly untrue and I countered:

"Even Logan doesn't claim that. It's been give and take as to the killings, with the Indians getting the best of it in scalps. A general war can result only from the Indians' belief that our settlers are crossing the mountains to settle in the Kentucky country."

"Ah! There you go! True to the dot, too!" he cried. "You Americans are restless. You acquire no attachment to any place. Wandering about seems to be engrafted in your natures. It's your great weakness that you should forever be thinking the lands farther off are better than those on which you're already settled."

"But land-grants on the Ohio are worthless without settlers," I meekly reminded. Colonel Lewis indulged in a frosty smile. His Excellency eyed me shrewdly, and said:

"Of course the lands must be settled sometime. The trouble comes from the frontier people's failure to understand that his Majesty's government has any right to forbid backwoodsmen from taking over any Indian lands which happen to hit the fancy.

"They have no idea of the permanent obligation of treaties which his Majesty's government has made with the various Indian nations. Why, some of the frontier people feel so isolated from the colonies that they wish to set up democratic governments of their own. A pretty kettle of fish! Then such creatures as this Crabtree murder such men as the brother of the powerful Cherokee chief. More trouble for the border.

"I shall offer a reward of a hundred pounds for Crabtree's arrest. If he is arrested the border men will release him. And yet they demand that his Majesty supply them with powder to defend their homes. Good God! What inconsistency! And as if we did not have enough trouble inside our colony there is Mr. Penn, to the north. As proprietary governor he sullies the dignity of his communications to the house of representatives by making the same a conveyance of falsehood, thereby creating trouble between Pennsylvania and Virginia.

"He is even now trying to make my Lord Dartmouth believe that my zeal in carrying on this war is not through any sense of duty to my king, but because of a desire for personal emoluments. If he can make the people of Virginia believe that, then I am helpless."

CERTAINLY this defense of his motives was not meant to convert me. My ideas worried his Excellency none. He was testing Colonel Lewis, whose reserve made the broaching of delicate subjects very much of a difficulty. The colonel quickly declared:

"Your Excellency knows that I thoroughly understand the true bias of Pennsylvania. We are with you in this war heart and soul. But I do think, to put it mildly, that Doctor Connolly has been indiscreet."

He had come back to the one phase of the conversation which interested him. The governor hesitated a moment, then asked me:

"What is your personal opinion of Doctor Connolly? Speak freely."

"I consider him to be a very ambitious, intriguing man, and very much of a fire-eater."

Both the gentlemen smiled, his Excellency being less genuine than the colonel. "To be an ambitious fire-eater is not a bad quality in these times," said the governor. "As to intrigue, so long as it is for Virginia I will not condemn it too strongly. What other charges are there in your arraignment?"

"I do not arraign him," I retorted. Believing I had gone too far ever to retrieve myself in the governor's good graces, and being made angry by the thought, I boldly continued: "Connolly is too autocratic. He carries things with too high a hand. He takes measures which neither your

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Excellency, nor any other of his Majesty's governors would dream of indulging in. He arrests and imprisons citizens without any pretense at legal procedure. It is because of such actions that many in Pennsylvania expressed the wish we might lose the war. I will add that I heard no such expressions of ill-will since the white families were murdered along the Monongahela."

"It does make a difference as to whose ox is being gored," grimly commented Colonel Lewis.

"Does Pennsylvania still blame Michael Cresap for the death of Logan's people?" asked the governor.

"Many of them do, because Connolly reduced him in rank. His reinstatement at your Excellency's command is not so generally known."

"Confusion and bickering!" wrathfully exclaimed the governor. "Virginia demanding a decisive war—England opposed to it. Our militia captains stealing each other's men—Sir William Johnson's death is most untimely."

Sir William Johnson dead! For the moment I was stunned. My facial expression was so pronounced that his Excellency kindly added:

"The sad news has just reached us. Never was he needed more and wanted more. The colonies have been so used to having him hold the Iroquois in check that few have paused to picture what might happen if his influence were removed from the Six Nations."

He rose and paced the room for a few turns. Then with a short bow to me he addressed the colonel, saying:

"With your permission, colonel, I believe I will retire for an hour. When the man Ward comes I wish to question him."

"By all means, your Excellency, take a bit of rest. I will call you if the fellow comes."

I turned to go and the colonel walked with me to the door, urging me to return and remain his guest that night. I thanked him, explaining an acceptance of his kind offer would depend on circumstances. He walked with me to my horse and with a side-glance at the house softly inquired—

"What do the people over the mountains and in Pennsylvania say about the Quebec Bill now before Parliament?"

"I do not remember hearing it mentioned. I do not think any of the settlers are interested in it."

"Not interested!" he groaned. "And if it is approved * by Parliament the American colonies will be robbed of hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory. They will lose the lands which already have been given them in their own charters. Think of Virginia and Pennsylvania quarreling over the junction of two rivers when we stand fair to lose all the country west of the Alleghanies. Young man, there's going to be war." This was very softly spoken.

"We're in it now," I stupidly replied.

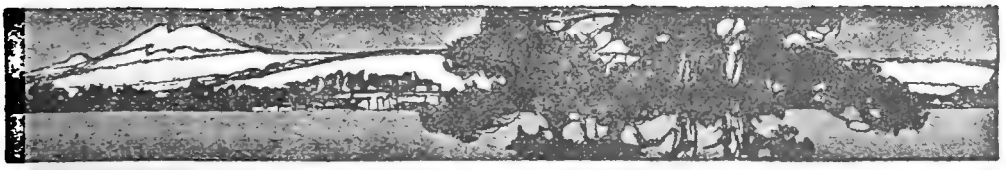
"I am speaking of war with England," he whispered.

I could scarcely accept it as being a true prophecy. I was not disturbed by it. The quarreling between colonies and the mother-country was an old story. Hiding my skepticism I asked, "When will it begin?"

"It began in 1763, when the English Ministry decided to collect revenues from the colonies," was the quiet reply. "It will soon be open war. I verily believe I am entertaining in my humble home today the last royal governor of Virginia."

*The Quebec Bill, to take effect in 1775, was approved June 22, 1774, or before Colonel Lewis and Morris had their conversation.

TO BE CONTINUED



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Two of a Kind

by L Patrick Greene

"No Evidence," "The White Kaffir," etc.

AGGIE, the presiding goddess of "Kaffir" Smith's bar, looked up languidly from her book as Sergeant Blake of the Mounted Police entered.

"What cheer, 'Porky?' "

The man scowled.

"Give me a whisky and soda."

With an air of boredom Aggie placed the drink before him.

"Because they call you Porky and you look porky, that's no reason why you should act like a pig, old dear."

He grunted inarticulately.

"I think you are a pig," she said lightly.

He emptied his glass and sat down morosely at one of the tables.

Aggie watched him amusedly.

"'Jong' Dempster's waitin' for you in the parlor."

She jerked her head toward a door leading to an inner room.

Blake rose with a curse.

"Why the —— didn't you tell me that before?"

"Slipped my mind, dearie."

"Any one else in there?"

"Only a sundowner. He rolled in about an hour ago, looking all in. Said he'd been over a year prospecting on the veldt. Said he'd struck gold but it doesn't look to me as if he found anything but a ragin' thirst. You're not a bad hand at hiding away booze, Porky, but the lad in there could drink you under the table before a night was half-over."

"What did you let him in there for?"

"He seemed to know the ropes and looked harmless. Besides he——"

But Porky had passed on to the inner room, slamming the door behind him viciously.

"Wonder what's the matter with Porky this morning," murmured Aggie. Then, dismissing all thoughts of him from her pretty, empty head, she picked up the latest atrocity by the housemaids' favorite author and read avidly.

The inner room, known to its habitués as the "parlor," of Kaffir Smith's saloon was a dark and dismal place totally lacking ventilation. It reeked of stale liquor and tobacco-smoke. It was a mysterious room, a room of many exits cunningly hidden in the paneling, and because of the secrecy whereby one was enabled to enter and leave the room, it was the favorite meeting-place of members of South Africa's underworld.

"A successful raid of Kaffir Smith's inner room," had said one police official, "would bag ninety per cent. of the illicit diamond-buyers, gun-runners and other law-breakers in the country."

"Yes," replied another, "and fifty per cent. of South Africa's public officials."

Of course both of these statements were grossly exaggerated but, because of the element of truth in the latter statement, it was tacitly admitted that Kaffir Smith's place was under protection. The secret exits were seldom used save at such times when a raid—of which the occupants of the inner room had been warned—was made to quiet the demands of certain obnoxious reformers.

A BIG loose-limbed Dutchman greeted Porky boisterously as he entered.

"*Allemahtig*, but you're late, ma-an."

"The chief was down from Johannesburg. I had to see him off on the northbound train,"

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Porky explained shortly. He sat down at Jong's table and poured out a stiff peg from the bottle of whisky which stood on the table.

Jong watched him curiously.

"You ain't sick, are you? Got fever?"

"No. I'm —— worried. This game's getting dangerous." Jong laughed.

"It would be more dangerous to leave it."

There was a note of menace in his tone, and Porky looked up quickly.

"What's the matter, ma-an?" The Dutchman spoke in a sort of nasal singsong.

"Aggie said that there was a sundowner in here," Porky said, disregarding Jong's question. "Where is he?"

Jong pointed to a table in the darkest corner of the room, where Blake could dimly make out the figure of a man.

Walking over to the table, Porky shook the man, apparently asleep, violently.

"Let's have a look at you," he growled.

The man sleepily opened his eyes.

"Lemme alone," he whined. "I ain't done nothin'."

Porky closely scrutinized the man's face, noted the shaggy, unkempt beard and tangled mass of hair, his bloodshot eyes and tattered clothing.

"What are you doing here?"

"Sleepin' and drinkin'; drinkin' and sleepin'."

"*Ach sint* ma-an, let him alone. He's harmless," said Jong.

Porky released his hold on the sundowner, who sprawled across the table and was soon sleeping noisily.

"They say the Major's in town," he said in explanation as he returned to Jong's table, "and I'm not taking any chances of letting him slip through my fingers."

Jong roared with laughter.

"*Allemahtig!* What's the matter with you —— fools of the police? A ma-an only has to speak of the Major and you all get the wind-up. But what's your worry? I heard he was in Portuguese Territory."

"So he was. But he's back again, the chief said."

"Well why didn't your chief arrest him?"

"There's no evidence against the man, and besides the chief didn't say he saw him; but he did see the Major's nigger, Jim, and they say the Major can't get along without his nigger."

Porky cursed fluently and then lapsed into a moody silence.

"Is it this Major ma-an that's on your mind?"

"No. They're on to our game at Headquarters. Some one's been spilling the beans, and the chief—he's newly appointed—is running straight."

"Do they know anything for sure?"

"I don't know; I don't think so, but——"

Porky hesitated, then burst out in a paroxysm of child-like rage.

"He's a slim one, the new chief. We can't pull wool over his eyes. He did a lot of noseying around and wanted to know how I could support a big racing-stable on a policeman's salary. Blast him!"

Porky's thoughts turned to the parting words of the chief.

"I'm not making any accusations, sergeant," the official had said curtly as he boarded the train, "but there's something going on down here that I don't quite understand. We of the Mounted have a reputation for straight dealing, and I'll show no mercy to the man I discover endangering that reputation. Understand?"

"Blast him!" said Porky again. "I'm going to pull out and run straight, Jong."

"Don't be a *verdoemte* fool, Porky. They can't prove anything on you. You don't take any risk. All you do is to take the sparklers from the natives and hand 'em over to me. You don't hold 'em over twelve hours. Where's the risk? Who's going to search you—Detective Sergeant Blake of the Mounted Police? It 'ud look fishy for me, a diamond-merchant, to be seen in company with natives from the mines, wouldn't it?"

Porky shook his head in indecision.

"You lost pretty heavily at the races yesterday, didn't you?"

"Dropped a cool thousand, and you know I did."

"Well, listen, ma-an. There's a chance for you to get some of that back. The compound manager of the Lonely Mine lost at the races yesterday, too."

Porky straightened up in his chair.

"Ah! I thought that 'ud interest you. We've drawn a blank at the Lonely Mine—up to now; up to now." Jong looked meaningly at Porky.

"Did you get next to him?"

"I did. He was a bit shy at first, but when he saw the color of my money there was nothing to it. Listen. A bunch of his natives are going home to their kraals today. Of course he'll search them—he's an honest man—but he won't think of opening a wound in a black boy's thigh; he's too kind-hearted for that. And there's six of them," Jong continued triumphantly, "six of 'em with big cuts in their thighs, and the wounds are festering. You know why? They call for an operation and you're going to be the doctor."

JUST then the man at the corner table began to pound noisily on his table.

"What do you want?" demanded Jong.

"A drink—you. I want a drink," the other replied thickly.

Jong pressed a button near his table, and when Aggie entered pointed to the sundowner.

"He's still thirsty, Aggie."

"What'll it be this time?" she called.

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"Gin and bitters, Ducky."

Aggie tossed her head.

"My, how that lad can mix them," she said confidentially to Jong.

"Oh, get out of here," Porky grunted impatiently.

"I've no desire to stay," she replied haughtily. "There's a proper gentleman waiting for me out there."

"Yes?" questioned Jong with interest.

"Wears a monocle and says 'bah Jove!' " Aggie's imitation of the drawl was grossly exaggerated. "Oh, he's a regular Bond Street Johnny, all right."

"What's his name?" said Porky with a show of interest.

"He didn't say, and I'm too much of a lady to ask him."

"Bah!"

"Tut-tut! Ain't we quick-tempered this morning. Well, I'll go out of here glad enough. The bloke out there's a gentleman, and that's more than I can say for you."

After the girl had left the room the two men looked at each other significantly.

"That sounds like the Major!"

"Have you ever seen him, Porky?"

"No. But I've heard his description lots of times. Round, clean-shaven face; stands about five-foot-ten, but looks less; wears a monocle and speaks with a drawl."

Jong looked disgusted.

"That's a —— of a description."

"Oh, I don't know. There's not so many men wearing monocles round this *dorp*. I bet it's him all right. Don't forget that his boy was seen in town. Where one goes, the other's not far off."

When Aggie reentered with the sundowner's drink, that man lurched forward to meet her and collapsed heavily on a seat nearer to the two men.

"Keep the change, sweetheart," he hiccupped, throwing a half-sovereign down on the table. "It's all 've got."

"Is the Johnny still out there, Aggie?" questioned Jong.

"Yes. He says he's going to stay here a while. Wanted to know if we had a 'room and bawth!' "

Porky slipped a shilling into the girl's hand.

"Call him the Major, Aggie, and let us know what he says."

A few minutes later Aggie reentered, smiling broadly.

"Business is good this morning," she giggled.

"Well?" questioned the two men.

"Says I, 'It's terrible hot today, ain't it, Major?' An' strike me pink, he was so taken aback you could have knocked him down with a feather.

" 'How did you know,' says he, 'that I was the Major?' Then he takes out his monocle, polishes it and screws it back again. ''Pon my soul,' he says, 'but you're a deucedly discerning young lady. But you won't tell any one else, will you?' And he slips me half a quid. He's a gentlemen, he is."

"Well, here's another," said Jong. "Go out there and talk pretty to him for five minutes or so, and then see if you can get him to come in here."

"You blamed fool. What do you want him in here for?" said Porky, rising wrathfully as the girl left the room.

Jong's hand shot out and grasped him firmly by the wrist.

"Sit down and listen, ma-an. Here's a chance for you to make a clean-up and clean your record at headquarters."

Porky sat down unwillingly.

"Well?" he grunted.

"The Major doesn't know you're a policeman—who would for that matter?—does he? No, I thought not. Well, when we get him in here, we'll let on that we've got word of some blacks who've got some diamonds and we haven't got the money to buy them or the chance to negotiate. Better than that, we'll let him in on this game tonight, on equal share. He'll take us up if all I've heard of him's true."

"That's a —— of a scheme," interjected Porky.

"Wait, ma-an. I'm not yet all through. You'll take him with you when you go to meet the niggers tonight, get the diamonds and then arrest him for illicit diamond-buying."

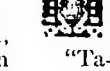
A light of comprehension spread over Porky's face.

He saw that Jong's plan offered him the opportunity to put himself in right all round—to square his losses, to regain the confidence of the chief, thus making it possible for him to act as agent for the I. D. B.'s yet longer, and to earn the enormous reward offered by the Diamond Mining Syndicate for the arrest of the leader of a gang of I. D. B.'s. It would be easy to fasten the leadership on a man of the Major's reputation.

Turning the plan over in his mind, Porky could see no possible chance for failure.

"But what about the diamonds—are we to hand them all over to the syndicate?"

"*Ach sis*, no, ma-an. Let the Major have some of the smaller ones. That'll be all that will be necessary to convict him. For the rest—Quiet. Here he comes. Let me handle him."



THE knob of the door turned and the door opened slowly, admitting a tall, immaculately dressed man.

"Ta-ta, old dear," he called to the girl in the bar. "As the bally Dutchmen say, 'If I don't see you, so long, hullo!' "

Closing the door, he turned and took in with a shrewd glance the other occupants of the room.

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His jaw dropped and his face wore a vacant expression as he fumbled with his eye-glass.

" 'Pon my word, I hope I'm not intrudin'," he said apologetically. "The lovely damsel assured me that there was no one in here. I—er——"

At the sound of his voice the sundowner looked up, grinning inanely.

"Come off yer perch, cocky. Blimme, I thought fer a minute it was a bloomin' girl."

Porky rose to greet the newcomer.

"Don't mind him—he's drunk. You're not intruding, Major. Come and join us in a drink."

"I don't mind if I do," said the other, drawing up a chair. "But I'll give you my word that I find it perfectly astounding that I appear to be so well known here. I came here strictly incognito, if you know what I mean. I didn't think any one knew me in this *dorp*."

"The Major is well known throughout the colony."

"Really I'm afraid you flatter me. But if that's the case I'd better remove myself to distant spots before some of my friends of the police see me."

Jong laughed.

"We're all in the same boat here, Major. You don't have to worry about the police; you're too slick for them."

"Do you really think so? Then I'll stay. But you gentlemen have the advantage of me. You know my name, while I—pardon me—don't know yours. What?"

"My name's Brown," said Porky, "and this," indicating Jong, "is Smith. We are in the same line of business as yourself — diamond-merchants." Porky winked.

" 'Pon my word, gentlemen, but that's perfectly rippin'. I'm charmed to meet you. And what delightfully unusual names. Mine, by the way, is Jones."

He laughed gleefully. "And how's the diamond-business, Messrs. Brown and Smith?"

"I was wondering," said Porky slowly, "if you'd care to enter the firm——"

"Making it Brown, Smith and Jones? Delighted, I'm sure. But why rope in an utter stranger?"

"We've got to have some one we can trust, and the Major's got the reputation of playing square with his pals."

Jones bowed.

"Drop this fooling," growled Jong, "and let's get down to business. Listen, Major——"

"Jones, if you please, Smith."

"All right, Jones then. You've heard of the Lonely Mine?"

"I've heard that it's made the richest finds round here."

"That's the one. Well, we've got next to the compound manager of the Lonely Mine. He's a hard man to tackle, and no one has, up to now, been able to get next to his niggers. But he lost a lot of money on the races yesterday and was only too glad to listen when I made him a present. Well, six of the blacks who are going home today carry with them a hatful of stones as big as walnuts, so the manager said, and we've made arrangements to meet them for a trade."

"Why call in a third party? Can't you swing it alone?"

Jong spat disgustedly.

"—— no. We spent all our capital bribing the manager and haven't enough left to pay the niggers, let alone getting the stones to a good market. That's where you come in. We'll split equal shares. There ought to be a thousand clear profit."

Jones coughed deprecatingly.

"As I see it," he said, "you want me to pay the bloomin' niggers for the stones, take the risk of sellin' them and then to divvy up on equal shares with you two. That's a bally generous proposition—I don't think."

"What do you expect?" exploded Porky heatedly. "We've already taken the risk of getting information and have spent all our capital squaring the compound manager—he wouldn't work on shares—and getting next to the natives. Besides I'll have to go with you to make the deal with the natives; they wouldn't deal with you."

"You mean you don't trust me," said Jones softly.

"Oh, have it any way you like. At any rate we're trusting you to make a fair split of the money you get for the diamonds. I don't see where you stand to loose."

The other was silent.

"Oh, come on," said Jong contemptuously. "He's got no guts. Let's go and raise the money somewhere else."

"Wait a minute, Messrs. Brown and Smith. I'll join your firm. When and where do we meet the niggers?"

"Tonight at an old working I own. I'll call for you here about nine o'clock."

"Top-hole. I'm going down to a place the girl told me of to sleep. I'll meet you here tonight all right. Until then I'm going to stay doggo. Can't afford to take any risk. Toodle-oo."

He passed gaily out into the bar and they heard him chaffing the barmaid.

Jong looked at Porky contemptuously.

"And that's the ma-an who's been playing merry —— with the police?"

Porky flushed.

"He does seem to be a —— fool, but he's slick just the same. Hadn't you better keep an eye on him, Jong?"

"No. We've nothing to fear from him. What could he do?" Jong rose lazily and stretched his big bulk, chuckling softly.

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"It's great, ma-an, I tell you. We get the diamonds for nothing; the reward for capturing an I. D. B., and you'll be able to work for us, free from suspicion, from now on. Who'd think of suspecting Detective Sergeant Blake, the man who captured the Major? I wouldn't be surprized if they gave you a commission!"

Still chuckling, he pressed a hidden spring in the paneling of the room. A door opened and the two men passed through it into a narrow passage leading to two exits at opposite sides of the building.

The door closed silently behind them and the sundowner was left alone.

About ten minutes later he lurched noisily to his feet and stumbled awkwardly through the door leading to the bar.

Aggie looked up in surprize from her book.

"Going so soon?"

"Yes—hic—money's all gone. Mus' go an get some more."

"Have a drink on the house before you leave."

She poured out a generous potion which he swallowed at one gulp. Then he staggered out of the door and down the empty street.

"My, but he's got a nawful thirst," said Aggie as she passed into the parlor to tidy up.

Near the corner table where the sundowner had been sitting was a large flower-pot containing a withered rose-bush.

The earth was moist almost to the point of muddiness. And that was strange, for Aggie had for a long time neglected to water the plant. As has been said, Aggie was empty-headed, but a close examination of the pot explained, even to her, the sundowners colossal thirst.

"I never knew a rose-bush to thrive on whisky straight," she mused. "I must tell Porky."

Then returning to her book—she was at that exciting part where the hero confronts the villain with proof of his claim to the title—she characteristically forgot all about her discovery.

ON THE edge of the veldt that surrounded the township, and in the shade of a stunted baobab-tree, stood a small bell-topped tent such as is used by prospectors of the fortunate kind.

Near by a grizzled Hottentot was puffing furiously at the red embers of a camp-fire, seeking to bring them to a blaze that the water-billy might be brought quicker to a boil.

Two horses tethered to a light Cape cart were contentedly munching the sweet green grass that was placed before them.

Within the tent was the sound of splashing water and a man's not unmusical voice singing a rollicking ballad.

After a while the splashing ceased and the song was punctuated with grunts as the unseen singer vigorously toweled himself.

"*Baas.*" The Hottentot took the billy from the fire.

The singing stopped.

"Yes, Jim?"

"The shaving-water is ready."

"Good. Bring it here."

The Hottentot took the water into the tent and, emerging, sat down by the half-opened flap of the tent so that he could see the tall, well built figure of his *baas*.

"The *baas* lied today."

"Yes, Jim?"

"Yah! The *baas* said, 'I stay here. You go Jim to the *dorp* and buy scoff.' I went, but the *baas* did not stay."

"No, Jim?" The white man turned his well-lathered face toward the Hottentot. There was a gleam of amusement in his gray eyes—eyes which could look so bland and child-like.

"Yah!" Jim spat into the fire. "The *baas* was not wise."

"No, Jim?"

"The *baas* has work tonight, perchance, and with the man called Blake."

The white man's chin was receiving the gentle caress of his razor, and for a moment he did not speak.

"So that's his name, eh, Jim?"

"Yah. The *baas* had better not go tonight. The man Blake did not say he was a policeman?"

"No. He called himself—" The white man stopped abruptly and stared at the Hottentot in amazement.

"How did you know all this, you imp of darkness?"

Jim grunted.

"I am not altogether a fool, *baas*. If one knows how, it is possible for a black one to buy firewater at the place of Kaffir Smith. And—my ears are keen. Many things are known to me."

"I had always suspected as much. But some things are hidden even from thee."

"That is true, *baas*. Not yet do I understand why thou didst wear the glass in the right eye. Such is not thy custom."

The white man laughed.

"I have said that some things are hidden from thee."

He sluiced his face in a basin of cold water.

"The towel, Jim," he said, spluttering.

"'T is at thy hand, *baas*," said the Hottentot. "But thou wilt not go tonight, *baas*."

"My boots, Jim."

The Hottentot helped the white man pull on a pair of well-polished riding-boots.

"Thou wilt not go, *baas*?"

"Being forewarned, what harm?"

"That is well an' I go with thee, *baas*."

"Of a truth, yes, thou shalt go." The white man considered Jim silently; then—

"Do you know the *donga* near the man Blake's old mine, Jim?"

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"As I know my hand, *baas*. At that place I have met white men who had firewater to sell."

"Good. Then take the horses to that place tonight and wait for me there. Go secretly after the setting of the sun and all is dark, so that no man shall see ye."

"But what of the tent and the Cape cart?"

"Leave them here; they will come to no harm. We return here again ere the rising of another sun."

Two hours later, when the sun had set and the veldt was encompassed by a heavy darkness, the white man left the tent.

"I'm going to the *dorp*, Jim," he said, "to see that the appointment is kept. In an hour start for the place—the *donga* near the man Blake's mine."

"Yah, *baas*."

Whistling gaily, the man strode out toward the town and was soon lost in the blackness of the night.

"THE place is near here, Major." Porky gasped for breath. The trip from the township to the deserted mines had sorely tried his little-used muscles. Fearing to arouse comment, the two men had made the journey on foot, slinking unobserved through the narrow street that led through the native quarter and out on the veldt.

Soon a long, low object loomed up out of the darkness before them.

"That's the slag-dump," explained Porky. "Come on; the shanty's this way."

Turning abruptly to the right, they soon came to a dilapidated hut. Opening the door, Porky entered, closely followed by the other.

Porky struck a match and lighted a candle, then looked triumphantly at his companion.

"Pretty slick place to make a trade, ain't it, Major?"

The other closely scrutinized the place, noted the heavily barred door and the blanketed windows, which prevented any glimmer of light being seen from the outside.

"Bah Jove, yes," he assented, "it's pretty slick. But where are the blacks?"

Porky looked at his watch.

"It's not quite time. They'll be here any minute now though."

Even as he spoke stealthy footsteps sounded outside the hut, and a hyena screamed once.

"That's them now," Porky said excitedly. "Douse the light while I let them in."

The light was extinguished and Porky cautiously opened the door. Dark, silent forms glided into the hut.

The door was closed again.

"Now the light, Major."

The flickering light of the candle showed six natives huddled together as if for mutual encouragement. They were gaudily dressed in garments bought with the money earned by twelve months' hard labor in the mines.

"Do any of you speak English?"

They looked at each other blankly; then one was pushed forward.

"I speak it, *baas*."

"What's your name, boy?"

"Sixpence, *baas*."

"Well, Sixpence, my bucko, fork out your diamonds."

Sixpence turned and conversed volubly with his comrades.

"They saying," he said after a while, "that first you must give the money."

His face now wore a bold, defiant look as he looked at the two white men. He had no fear now, for were they not all on equal footing, partners in crime?

"Don't try that game with me," Porky said threateningly. "How can we give you the money until we've seen the stones?"

Sixpence still hesitated.

"Let me handle him," said the other white man.

"Is it that you don't trust us?" He spoke the native dialect. The faces of the others lighted up. Here was some one with whom they could all deal. Yet they were still content for Sixpence to be their spokesman.

"How are we to know, *baas*? We have been tricked many times by white men."

"And think ye that I would trick thee?"

Sixpence rubbed his head doubtfully.

"Thy pardon, *baas*, but thou art with this other; him we do not trust."

"How much do ye ask for the stones?"

"Five pounds for each one—big and small. The risk was great."

"It is a fair price. How many have ye?"

"Two each we carry here—" he pointed to his thigh—"and I have these others besides."

In his hand he held a thick-stemmed knob kerrie which he gave to the white man. It was surprizingly light.

"It is hollow?"

"Aye, *baas*." Sixpence took back the stick, pried out a plug, and six large diamonds rolled out on the floor.

Porky pounced on them eagerly.

"Lor', what a haul!"

The other held out his hand for them and Porky, as if reluctant to lose sight of them, gave them to him.

"As I make it, Sixpence, the count is sixteen."

"The *baas* forgets that I have two others here."

The white man whistled softly.

"'Pon my soul you're a glutton," he said.

Taking off his money-belt, he counted out thirty sovereigns.

"Thou see'st, Sixpence, I pay thee now for these I hold in my hand. As the others are given I will pay."

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"It is good, *baas*," answered Sixpence; pulling up one trouser leg way above the knee and disclosing a long, ugly-looking wound. This he gently opened with a sharp knife, bringing to light two diamonds. These, which were much smaller than the others, Sixpence carefully wiped and gave to the white man.

"Ten more pounds for thee, O Sixpence," said the white man. "Thou wilt be a rich man. Dost desire to become a headman?"

"Nay, but there is a maiden I greatly desire."

The white man laughed.

"It is ever thus."

Meanwhile the other natives were quickly following their leader's example. All had deep wounds in the fleshy part of the thigh, and each took from his wound two diamonds.

Porky nudged the arm of his companion.

"You're a fool to give them that price. Why didn't you beat them down? They'd have accepted a quid apiece and been glad to get it."

Porky begrudged the money which he counted as out of his own pocket; he intended to appropriate all he found on the Major after the arrest.

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"There's enough for all," he said. "And they've earned their share."

Soon the bargaining was finished.

Once again the light was extinguished that the door might be opened to permit the natives to leave.

"Trek hard and stop not on the way to drink firewater," ordered Porky.

"We will hasten that we may catch up with the others of our kraal ere sunrise," answered Sixpence. "*Shlaha gaghle, Inkosi.*"

"Aye. *Hambagaghle*—may thy path be smooth."

The natives quickly disappeared in the darkness, and as the two white men turned to reenter the hut they were hailed softly.

Porky's hand leaped to his revolver.

"It's only me," said Jong Dempster as he joined them.

"Couldn't trust me, eh?" sneered Porky. "Well, let's go inside. It give me the creeps hanging outside here."

They entered the hut and Porky busied himself with lighting the candle. Suddenly he wheeled round, revolver in hand.

"Throw up your hands, Major. You're under arrest for illicit diamond-buying."

There was a look of amazement on the man's face; then smilingly he raised his hands.

"So that's the game, is it, Porky Blake? I might have known better than to trust you and Jong Dempster."

The two men grinned.

"So you know us, do you? Well, much good that'll do you. Frisk him, Jong."

The Dutchman quickly turned out the captive's pockets.

"The fool hasn't got a gun," Jong grunted.

"Get the stones then. They're in his money-belt."

Jong removed the belt, opened it and pawed lovingly over the stones.

"You've got the reputation for being —— slick, Major, but you've run up against a snag this time."

"Bah Jove, yes. But I'm glad to know you're an honest man, old top. It's a fine thing, honesty—more precious than rubies, and all that sort of thing, don't you know."

Porky glowered.

"Give him his belt back, Jong. Only be sure to leave a couple of stones in it—we can afford to—so that I can find them on him when I search him at headquarters. Give me half his cash—I ought to have it all, by rights."

As they divided the spoils a look of triumph passed over the face of the captive.

"Not so honest after all, are you, old top?"

"Stow your gab."

"You'd better get a move on, Jong, if you're going to catch the mail train south."

"Can you manage the Major alone?"

"Here." Porky threw a pair of handcuffs on the table. "Put these on him. He can't play any tricks then."

AT THAT moment the door opened violently and a tall masked figure appeared in the aperture.

"Hands up, Messrs. Brown and Smith," drawled the intruder, "and you too, my gentle double, keep yours up."

Porky and Jong put up their hands with a curse and glowered viciously at the newcomer.

"'Pon my word," went on the newcomer, "but I hate to break up a little family party. I hope that I'm not intrudin'."

"Who the —— are you," shouted Porky.

"Tut tut, my dear sergeant. Don't get profane; it's such deucedly bad form."

The man who had elected to call himself Jones watched the newcomer with a smile of baffled amusement.

"You're the Major," he said finally.

"Then who are you? Jong exploded.

The masked man smiled and bowed.

"Let's postpone the inquiries, gentlemen. I've no time to spare, I'm sorry to say."

Reaching behind him, he tore down the blanket which covered the window. As he did so there was a crash of broken glass and the muzzle of a rifle appeared in the opening.

"Jim."

"Yah, *baas?*"

"Keep them covered and if any one moves, shoot. Understand?"

A grunt from without signified assent.

"Pardon me, Jong." The Major took the Dutchman's revolver and threw it out the door. Porky's quickly followed.

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"I'm surprized," said the Major, running his hand over the man who had impersonated him, "that you are unarmed. It is not the thing, you know, when playing with gentlemen like these two. They are a pretty pair, aren't they?" he went on, serenely eying the baffled men. "Turn out your pockets, old dears. No, not yours, old chappie. I can't imagine that they've left you anything. You will please keep your hands elevated—a little higher. That's splendid, thanks. You're simply perfect."

Turning his attention to the table, he surveyed the contents of Jong's and Porky's pockets. Disregarding the money, he picked up the little chamois bag into which Jong had put the stones.

"This is really too good of you, my dear Jong. I've always heard that if one kept one's ears open when in Kaffir Smith's back room one could learn something to one's advantage. But I never expected anything like this, 'pon my word, I didn't. Diamonds, as I live, and all for me. Of course there may be more but—*tempus* fugits, and I must follow its good example."

He backed toward the door as he spoke.

"I'm going now, but please keep your eye on the rifle in the window. It will keep you covered for another five minutes. I must have a little leeway before allowing a zealous policeman like you—'pon my soul I don't know who's the policeman and who's the thief—give chase to me. And now—" the voice changed and he winked broadly—"to sleep and drink, to drink and sleep."

With a quick leap he was outside the hut and slammed the door behind him.

In wrathful silence the three men watched the unwavering muzzle of the gun in the wilderness. Soon to their ears came the sound of mocking laughter and the rapid drumming of horse's hoofs. The sound quickly died away in the distance, but still they were held up by the threat of the gun.

The minutes flew by quickly. Then Jones wearily let his hands sink to his side and walked over to the window. Taking hold of the gun-muzzle, he pulled into the room the useless barrel of a rifle.

"Held up by that," he said in disgust.

Porky and Jong lowered their hands in amazement.

"It was the sundowner," they exclaimed, remembering the Major's last remark.

"It was the Major," said the man Jones.

"At least he didn't get your diamonds," said Jong, not sensing the full meaning of the other's statement.

"No. He didn't get mine."

"Look here," said Porky belligerently, "if he was the Major who the —— are you?"

"Perhaps Sergeant Blake would know me better if I wore a black mustache and the uniform of the corps he has disgraced," said the other curtly. "I did not make any accusation this morning, Blake, but I do now."

Porky's jaw sagged.

"The game's up, Jong. It's the chief," he said weakly.

"Exactly. I told you this morning that I couldn't understand some of the things that were happening down here. I left the train at the siding, shaved, changed into civilians—with an eyeglass—and came back on a freight to investigate.

"My plans miscarried a little. First, because you couldn't play even a crooked game straight, and secondly, because the Major—the real one—butted in unexpectedly."

Intercepting the desperate look that passed between the two men, he went on:

"No. Murder wouldn't help you. I took another leaf from the Major's book and wrote a letter to my next in command, telling him of my suspicions and plans.

"You'll return to your quarters and report yourself under arrest, Sergeant Blake. As for you, Jong Dempster, I've no evidence that will hold in a court of law against you. But your license as diamond trader expires tomorrow, doesn't it?"

Dempster nodded glumly.

"I thought so. Well, if I were you, I wouldn't apply for a renewal."

With that the chief walked briskly out of the hut and toward the town, leaving the two men to mutual recriminations.

ENTERING the police office and making himself known to the trooper in charge, the chief entered an inner room and ordered that Juffa, one of the police boys, be brought before him.

"Well, Juffa," he said when they were alone, "did ye obey?"

"*Aye inkosi.* All this day I kept a close watch over the Hottentot."

"And noted ye what white men he spoke with?"

"He spoke to no white men, *inkosi.*"

"Where went he?"

"To the veldt beyond the town, to the south. There stands a white man's camp, a tent and a Cape cart with two horses. A white man was there, but him I did not see. He was in the tent; him I heard singing."

"It was well done. Go outside and wait. In a little while I will come and thou shalt show me the way to this white man's camp. See that ye keep this secret."

"It is an order, *inkosi.*" Saluting smartly, Juffa withdrew and passing out of the building, waited in the darkness near by.

The chief left the inner room and chatted for a little while with the trooper; then he too left the building.

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Outside the door he paused while he lighted a cigar and then moved slowly off down the street.

He was quickly joined by Juffa.

"It is this way," said the police boy softly.

The two broke into an easy run, soon coming to the place where the Major had pitched his camp.

A light was burning in the tent.

"That is all, Juffa," said the chief. "Ye may return to sleep—and forget."

"To hear is to obey."

Juffa melted silently into the blackness of the night, and the chief went forward alone. Just as he was about to pull back the flap of the tent and enter, revolver in hand, a curt voice from within challenged:

"Who's there? Throw up your hands."

"Oh, come now, my dear Major," the chief replied, "that talk doesn't go. You can't see me and I have a good idea where you are."

He was answered by a soft chuckle right at his elbow.

"I've always found it convenient," went on the voice, "to have two exits to my tent. It provides a—draft, shall we say?"

The cold barrel of a revolver was pressed against the chief's temple.

"Enter, if you please, kind sir," the voice mocked.

Concealing his chagrin, the chief went into the tent closely followed by the Major. Seeing by the light of the lamp who his visitor was, the Major made a gesture of apology and threw his revolver down on the cot.

"Please forgive me, old top," he cried. "I had no idea it was you; 'pon my soul, I didn't." He waved to a deck-chair. "Take a seat—or perhaps you'd prefer the cot."

The chief slowly lowered himself into the chair.

"Have a smoke, Major," he said, proffering his cigar-case.

"Thanks, I don't mind if I do."

The Major lighted a match.

"A light, old man?"

"Thanks!"

For a while the two men smoked in silence, each striving to take the other's measure.

"I'm glad you came," drawled the Major finally. "I was rather expecting Porky or Jong—the bally rotters."

"Is this game worth the candle, Major?" said the chief quietly.

The Major looked blank.

"Worth the candle? Oh, yes, I see what you mean. Why, my dear old chap, you have no idea what a bully time I'm having." The Major leaned back on the cot and puffed luxuriously at his cigar.

"We need men like you in the police, Major."

"Thanks for the compliment, old top, but you will pardon me if I reply that I don't need the police. Blake's a policeman, isn't he?"

"He was."

The Major chuckled. "You have the official curtness, old dear. Have a drink?"

"Don't mind if I do."

The Major poured out two drinks.

"A toast, chief."

Both men rose.

"I give you 'the queen,' Major."

Solemnly they drank to the toast.

"Now to fox-hunting, chief," cried the Major gaily.

Again they drank with an almost religious observance of the ceremony. Then they sat and talked for a while of England, of the Hunting Shires; and the argument waxed fast and furious over the respective merits of the Quorn and Cottesmore Hunts.

There came a time when the conversation lapsed and both men sat smoking quietly, meditating on past days.

"Major," began the chief abruptly.

"Yes?"

"—— it all, man, why are you running against the law?"

"That's a bally personal question, don't you think," said the Major a trifle heatedly.

The chief flushed.

"Yes, it is, under the old footing. But we're not. I'm in command of the police and you," he hesitated, "you are what you are."

"And what's that?"

The chief made a gesture of impatience.

"We're not children; don't let's bandy words. Why don't you play straight? A pardon could be arranged and——"

The Major's hand went up in protest.

"Don't say it, old man. Did you know that I'd served a jail-sentence?"

The other made no attempt to conceal his amazement.

"No. When?"

"It was a few years ago. I won't say how many; you might be tempted to look up the records. I bought a diamond from a man—I was innocent then—and that same man arrested me for I. D. B. They sentenced me to two years on the Breakwater, working among the scum of the earth. That diamond was to have been set in a ring and— But I never went back after I was released. How could I?"

"I'm sorry, old man," said the chief with an awkward attempt at sympathy.

The Major straightened up.

"'Pon my soul, but I'm getting deucedly sentimental."

"Yes," assented the other, "you almost made me forget why I came out here."

"Just why did you come, chief?"

"I want the diamonds you took from Porky and Jong tonight."

"I took diamonds away from a policeman? You flatter me, old top."

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"Oh, stop joshing, Major. I know you've got them, and you know that I know you've got 'em."

"Gettin' rather complicated, what? But how do you know I've got them?"

"I saw you take them."

"Yes, so you did. But what then? You can't find them and you can't prove that I took them."

"I think that my word," began the chief gently.

"Would be taken before mine," finished the Major. "Exactly. But what of the rest of the story. How would it go? Porky and Jong and you—the head of the police department—in a deserted hut, at night, out on the veldt. Diamonds galore. Pray what was our good friend the chief doing there? Understand that is not my question, but that of the judge and—oh, you know how the talk goes around."

The chief made a gesture of impatience.

"So some one took the diamonds away," went on the Major airily.

"You took the diamonds."

"Can you prove it? Remember, the light was dim and the man was masked."

"Are you going to give me the diamonds?"

"Really, you are bally persistent. Supposin' I had 'em. Why should I give them back? Who loses? You've got the information you wanted regarding Blake and Jong. You win. You can't say that the Mining Syndicate loses when they close down the mines part of the year for fear of flooding the market. No, I can't see——"

"You forget, Major," interposed the chief, "that I paid five pounds apiece for the stones."

"Bah Jove, did you? That's rich. I wonder if Jim could get a line on the natives you dealt with. It 'ud be rich to bring a charge of I. D. B. against you. What with the natives and Jong, *and* Porky I'd have a good case."

The chief smiled.

"But I couldn't do that," went on the Major, "though you do see, don't you, old chap, that there's no moral reason why I should give you the stones—always supposin' I had 'em."

"No. I don't see that quite."

"I'm afraid you're a little tired; the old brain's not working at top pressure. But at least you'll admit that you have no case against me?"

"You forget my witnesses, Jong and Blake?"

"No I don't forget them. But they couldn't swear to me. They've never seen me unmasked and, as I said before, the light was very dim. Of course they couldn't possibly swear that the man in the mask, the sundowner and the Major, are one and the same person. Besides I can't imagine that they would relish giving evidence to help you win a case. Really I can't."

"Supposing I offered to forget all about their past misdeeds on condition that they swore to your identity. What then?"

"What then? Why you'd have me bluffed—supposin' I had the diamonds. But you couldn't do that."

"No I couldn't do that."

"So you see," exclaimed the Major triumphantly, "your case falls flat."

"It does," admitted the chief, rising to leave.

"Won't you stay a while longer? It's ages since I had a chat like this. I'd like to be able to persuade you how moral I really am."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said the chief with a smile. "Good night, Major."

"Wait a minute, old chap." The Major opened a small trunk and took out a roll of bank notes. Counting out sixteen five-pound notes, he handed them to the chief.

"It's a reimbursement of the money you paid for the stones," he said in explanation. "We can dispense with a receipt."

"Thanks, Major," said the chief, pocketing the money. "And, Major—"

"Yes, old chap."

"Some day I'm going to send for you and——"

"Perhaps I'll come. Sure you must go? Good night."

"Good night."

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Promoting Polecat Perkins

by W C Tuttle

Author of "Assisting Ananias," "Evidently Not," etc.

CHUCK WARNER never got drunk like a gentleman. As far as the intoxication was concerned, I reckon he felt the effects the same as a gentleman does, but what I mean is this: he always got into bad company.

Give Chuck a quart of hooch and he could find more horsethieves, burglars, outlaws, et cettery in fifteen minutes than all the officers in Montana could find in a whole term of office.

Me and "Muley" Bowles and "Telescope" Tolliver usually rode herd on him when his ears begins to twitch, but sometimes he'd manage to wobble away and find some reward-dodger to share his bottle and troubles.

Chuck was and is the biggest liar unhung, and just as soon as he gets three drinks under his belt he hunts for some stranger to listen to him prevaricate. Everybody believes Chuck—once. He's got the eyes of a saint, the ears of a jassack, and his conscience is plumb elusive.

Me and Telescope and Muley are riding down Paradise way, when we meets Chuck and a stranger. We didn't exactly meet 'em—we found 'em. They're setting in the dust in the middle of the road, and Chuck is trying to teach the stranger to sing "Just Tell Them That You Saw Me."

The stranger is sort of fat around the waist and collar, and has a little stubby mustache. He's got a derby hat, shoved down over his head until it makes sails of his ears. They don't even see us ride up.

"She goes like thish," says Chuck, making up an awful face, "Jush whisper if you get a chance to mo-o-o-ther de-e-ar and shay——"

"Thasall ri'," says the feller. "You've tol' me that sheven times. Is tha' all 'v it? How's thish?" He twists his face all out of shape, and lets out a few notes, but Chuck slaps him on top of his hard hat, and begs him to desist.

"What's the idea, Chuck?" asks Telescope, and Chuck squints up at us.

"The idea," says Chuck, dignified-like, "is to get the tune and the words to fit each other. I would I were a bird."

"I would you were," says Muley, "and then I would I had a shotgun. Get out of that dust. You're drunk."

Chuck grins and puts his arms around his friend.

"Misser Brady, meet Muley Bowles. He's inshultin' us, Brady."

"Wrong diagnoshis," says Brady. "This is shock—induced pri—primar'ly by havin' horsh walk from under us."

"Who is Brady?" asks Telescope.

"Take off your hat, Misser Brasy," says Chuck. Brady tries, but the hat is anchored too tight.

"Never mind," says Chuck. "Misser Brady's a detective, ain't yuh? Remember Sherlock Holmes, Muley? He used to work for Misser Brady. Fact. Used to carry Misser Brady's spyglass. Wonnerful man. Oh, my! Nose like bloodhound. Fact. Tell'm how you tracked grasshoppers across the ice, Misser Brady. How many drinks did you have with me?"

"Fi'teen," says Brady, after thinking a while.

"Wonnerful mem'ry," applauds Chuck. "Want drink?"

"Um-m-m-m-m," says Brady.

"Meanin' 'yesh'," says Chuck. "Well educated. Speaks lots of languages, such as United States, English, profane——"

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"What's he detectin' around here?" asks Telescope.

"Sh-h-h-h," cautions Chuck. "Never ask detective questions. I showed him lot of cow tracks in the shand, but he didn't know what they was, which shows he ain't cattle-detective. He's from Chicago. I tol' him I was born there an——"

"You wasn't born there, Chuck," says Muley.

"He don't know it. I don't know for sure that he's from Chicago; so I've got as much right to lie as he has. Can you find our horsh, Muley?"

We did. It was some job getting 'em both on one horse, but we hoisted them up, and took 'em back to Paradise.

Anyway, Chuck didn't want to go to the Cross J ranch, because he heard "Jay Bird" Whittaker say something about digging post-holes for a new corral. Chuck won't dig. Neither will any of the rest of us, for that matter. We missed Chuck and Brady right away, but we don't care, as Brady's too drunk for Chuck's lies to hurt him any.

Telescope Tolliver is a tall, tenor-singing puncher from the Lapover country where Kentucky laps over into Tennessee. Seems that every sheriff in every county in a straight line detween here and that spot in Kentucky runs sort of a relay race with Telescope, and he beat 'em all, and hit Yaller Rock county when the sheriff was hiding out from the Vigilance Committee. So he was safe.

Muley weighs two hundred and fifty, tangles his feet in his own rope, and recites his own poetry. Me, I'm Henry Clay Peck, a clean-minded cowboy, big-hearted, industrious, and I do well on a banjo. I can sing when the spirit moves me, but it takes about three inches in a wash-tub, and some one to start the tune.

CHUCK didn't show up at the ranch until the next day, and he's painfully sober. We sniffs him over and feels of his pulse, knowing that everything ain't right.

"Got tonsilitis?" asks Telescope. "Can't swaller?"

"Brady reformed him," says Muley.

"Gather around me, cowboys," says Chuck. "I've got it."

"You shoot him, Henry," begs Telescope. "I've got a sore finger."

"Listen, you comedy coyotes," wails Chuck.

"Use the white of a aig," advises Muley. "Draw it to a head."

"I told you I've got the biggest idea in the world," says Chuck.

"Now, go and lay down, Chuckie," begs Telescope. "I know. In about a hour you'll begin to see all kinds of things, but they ain't really there. What you been drinkin'—mescal?"

"Oh, all right," says Chuck. "Go ahead and punch cows for forty a month, and see if I care. Live and die unhonored and unsung, get drunk on the last of the month, and then punch cows for thirty days more. I'm goin' to rise above it—me. I know Opportunity when I see it."

"Why not rent a hall and put on a revival?" asks Muley. "You sure see the sweet side of life, Mister Warner."

"I don't ask for no help," says Chuck, sad-like. "I can do it all alone, but I thinks of our friendship, and——"

"I'm goin' to forget that sore finger in a minute," says Telescope. "Remember, Chuck, you're talkin' to folks who know your re-motest ancestors."

"Aw, let him tell it," says I. "It must be an awful lie, 'cause I never seen him so sad in my life."

"It's no lie," says Chuck. "It's Gospel truth —unless Brady lied, and he was too drunk to do that. Seems that a rich man named Jonathan Perkins up and died. Somewhere in the West is his brother, whose name's Archibald. Said Jonathan knowed not of his brother's whereabouts, but he not only mentioned him in the will, but spoke plumb out loud. He had tried to find Archie, but failed. He also had detectives huntin', and they had the same luck.

"Then brother Jonathan says, says he—'I hereby sets aside a reward of ten thousand dollars for information leadin' to the conviction of brother Archibald,' or words to them effects. They hankers for poor old Archie. This here bunch of money awaits his comin', in the town called Beverley, the same of which is a place near Chicago. That's why Mister Brady came here, but he's returnin' home without any chance to lift the reward. He says that Archibald must be dead."

"Do we cry now?" asks Telescope.

"Cheer, you danged snake-hunters," grins Chuck.

"Who do we cheer? Archibald, Jonathan or Brady?" asks Muley.

"Me," says Chuck. "We're going to get that reward."

"I know why he came home sober—he's lost his mind," says Telescope.

"We're goin' to get that ten thousand," declares Chuck, "and then we're going to make Mister Perkins, whose first name is Archibald, double the ante. *Sabe?*"

"Oh, well, there's no hopes now," groans Muley. "When they gets violent—hope is gone."

"Hen, make 'em believe me," wails Chuck.

"I'll do what I can for them if they'll turn around and do the same for me. Where in —— are you going to find this here Perkins person, Chuck?"

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"Polecat!"

Muley's foot slipped, and he fell off the bunk, where he sets and blinks like a fat owl. "Polecat" Perkins is a scrawny, watery-eyed *hombre*, who lives in a dugout and raises skunks for their hides. He don't even know that Cleveland ain't President any more. His mustache hangs almost to his shoulders, and he wears a pair of chaps that only comes to his knees.

"I do wish that somebody would hog-tie Chuck," wails Telescope, "Next thing yuh know he'll be foamin' at the mouth. Ten thousand dollars for Polecat Perkins!"

"His name is Perkins," argues Chuck, "and this other Perkins is dead; so there ain't nobody to say him nay."

"My gosh!" says Muley, soft-like. "I wonder if it could be done? But we ain't got money enough to finance it."

"I've got a hundred and sixty," says Chuck, "and I've got two broncs and a sixty-dollar saddle."

"Telescope's got over two hundred in the bank," says Muley, "and Henry's got somethin' besides his slicker for a rainy day."

"And Polecat will have to agree to give us ten thousand more or we won't promote him," says Chuck. "Now, you can see why I stayed sober."

"Chuck, are you tellin' us the truth?" asks Telescope.

"So help me God. I'm puttin' in my own money, ain't I?"

"I've never been East," says Muley. "I don't know a darn thing about it, only what I've heard, and most of that was from Chuck."

"I'll buy a stack in the game," nods Telescope, "and I know Henry's game, 'cause he's kept his mouth open ever since Chuck sprung the scheme, and he's swallered three innocent little flies."

POLECAT is setting in front of his dugout, perusing a almanac, when we rides up.

"Howdy, Polecat," says Telescope. "How's everything?"

"Ticklish," says Polecat. "The stars are inclined to be frisky. Carpricorn is ridin' sign on the Big Dipper, and the Dog Star is chasin' his tail. It says there's apt to be a tidal wave in Tasmania. Come up to buy some pets?"

"No sale," says Telescope. "We're here to talk business. How'd yuh like to get your hands on a lot of money?"

Polecat deliberates a while, and then—

"Gittin' my hands on it ain't much inducement, but if I can keep my hands on it—shoot."

We climbs off our broncs, and gathers around Polecat, while Chuck tells him all about it. Polecat chaws slow-like and listens closely.

"All you've to to do is to be Archibald," says Chuck.

"I ain't kickin' about the name, but I sure hates to part with ten thousand good dollars fer nothin'."

"You stingy old whangdoodle!" explodes Telescope. "We're goin' to make a million for you, and you hollers about a measly ten thousand. You're about as grateful as a sidewinder."

"I could go alone and get it all," grins Polecat.

"You could start, you mean," says Chuck, "but you'd die about three miles from Paradise. You've lived with skunks so long that your morals are plumb furred."

"I'll go if it don't cost me nothin'," says Polecat. "I won't spend a cent. *Sabe?* Do we go on a steam train?"

"It's near Chicago," says Muley.

"Chicago? Seems like I've heard of that place. When do we go?"

"Tomorrow," says Chuck. "You've got to get some clothes, 'cause they won't let you on a train thataway. Take a bath, too. Take several baths. Be there before noon."

"What fer do I take a bath?"

"Go and have the horse-doctor examine your nose," says Muley.

"My nose is all right," declares Polecat. "I sure smell."

"Let's go before we say something mean," says Muley.

"VACATION?" gasps Jay Bird. "Va—uh—my gosh!"

"Yes'm," says Chuck, "we need one—bad."

"Will we get our jobs back when we return?" asks Muley.

"I suppose so. I've got to have cowpunchers to make this look like a cow-ranch, and you fellers are no worse than the rest."

"We may not come back," states Telescope.

"Well," says Jay Bird," I won't cheer until I know for sure."

Them tickets cost us seventy-five dollars per each. We dug up three hundred and seventy-five good dollars. And that wasn't round-trip tickets, either.

Man, I'd say that Polecat was a changed man. He comes out of the general store, as we walks up. His old dog, Shylock, which has been waiting outside, takes one look at Polecat and then went kihooting off up the street. Polecat looks at us and grins. He's got on a new black suit, which was built for a man about as tall as Telescope. The sleeves comes to the ends of his fingers, and the pants wrinkle all the way down to where they drag around the soles of his boots.

He's got a pink shirt, a green vest and no collar nor tie, and on his head is a gray derby hat, which is about seven and five-eighths,

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while Polecat's head is about a six and three-eighths.

"I feel like a danged dude," says he, foolish-like. "Spelled f—o—o—l," said Telescope. "Where in —— did you get that bunch of misfits?"

"They're jist comfortable," says Polecat. "He, he, he! You fellers owe me forty-seven dollars and six bits."

"Owe you?" says I. "What for?"

"Clothes. I ain't spendin' my own money, y'betcha."

"What was the six bits for?" asks Muley, looking at Polecat from a rear view.

"Three baths."

"Well, we ain't dressin' yuh, Polecat," declares Telescope.

"Then I don't go. Anyway, I don't like trains."

"If—if we pays for the clothes, will you pay for the baths?" asks Chuck.

"Never! I won't pay fer nothin' I don't need. I'll take these clothes right back. *Sabe?* This ain't no funerial of mine, gents. Do I get my money back?"

He did. Then we went to the train. Four of us has our war-sacks along, but Polecat brought two big sacks and one small one.

"You need a pack-horse, Polecat," says Telescope. "What in —— have you got in all them sacks?"

"I've got my blankets, some grub, a fry-pan and a coffee-pot, and in this here sack I've got some danged fancy samples of galena ore. I'm hooked up fer a stay."

"Abo-o-o-o-a-rd!" yells the conductor, and we climbs on.

The conductor looks us over and sort of blocks us from the door.

"You'll have to get rid of them guns," says he. "We don't allow nobody to pack guns on the train."

"Man," wails Polecat, "I'd feel plumb naked without mine."

"Don't you pack one?" asks Telescope of the conductor.

"I do not."

"Then you hadn't ought to talk like that to men what does. Move over."

"I'll stop the train and have you put off!" he yelps.

"We've got tickets," says Telescope, "and if you put us off this train you'll never see it start again." And we files inside, with Polecat in the lead, draggin' his outfit. We staggers down that car, and into another, and are almost through that one when Polecat yelps:

"Whoa! We're on the back porch."

Just then we hit a curve and almost lost Polecat. He fell over a little camp-stool and pitched plumb over the porch, but Telescope got him by the slack of his pants and hauled him back.

"Hellity blip!" gasps Polecat. "Do yuh reckon this here thing is safe?"

Rur-r-rip! we roars across a bridge. Polecat grabs his sacks and pitched 'em back through the door, and then makes a grab for the door.

"I'm goin' back!" he yelps.

Just then a man in a blue uniform staggers out of the door, and stands there rubbing his forehead.

"Who threw that sack of rocks?" he wails.

"Rocks, ——!"croaks Polecat. "Them is samples of galena ore, you tenderfoot."

The feller stands there a while, caressing his face, and then he says, "Tickets."

Chuck hands him all five of 'em.

"Pullman tickets," he demands sort of mean-like.

"We ain't goin' to Pullman," says Chuck. "These the only tickets you've got?"

"My gosh, ain't them enough?" asks Telescope. "Can you see more than five of us?"

"You'll have to pay extra to ride here."

"Where are these tickets good for—in the engine?" asks Muley.

"Day coach—six cars ahead!" he snaps.

"Day coach?" asks Muley.

"Smoker, too."

"Cigarets,' admits Muley. "Any law against it?"

"You just can't ride here, that's all," says he.

"We're havin' a lovely walk," murmurs Chuck.

"You don't understand me," says he. "These are sleepers."

"You know what he means, Muley?" asks Telescope.

"He just said we didn't; why dispute the gent?"

The feller turns around and goes back inside, talking to himself.

"Boss," says a voice, and here is a colored feller, with a white coat on, leaning out of the door. "Boss, is you-all connected in any way with de li'l feller whut wears de fancy vest?"

"Why?" asks Telescope.

"You-all betta come and git him, dasall. He's sort of jammed in the corrido' 'tween his sacks, and he says he's gwine scalp anybody whut teches him. Nobody kin go in no' out."

We picks up our sacks and weaves down that car. Polecat is in that narrow chute at the end of the car, and he's plumb mad. Muley gets against him and manages to shove him to where the car gets wider.

"Too much speed," complains Polecat. "Got surrounded with my plunder and couldn't get loose. If this danged thing ever slows down I'm goin' to camp. How much further do we have to go?"

"About two days and nights," says Chuck.

"My Gawd! We'll be in Yurrup or our

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graves! Gimme a burro, man! Gimme a burro! I ain't in no hurry a-tall."

Then we starts out to find the car where our tickets are honored. Polecat has a sack under each arm and his hat in one hand. The conductor gets in front of Polecat, and Polecat, like a danged fool, pulled his gun. The conductor ducked into a little room at the end of the car, and let the pe-rade past. We went through some more cars and after while we comes to a place where some men are smoking.

"Looky!" grasps Polecat, holding out his hat.

"Where'd yuh get the watch?" asks Muley.

"Feller put it in my hat. He tried to put some money in it, too, but Telescope shoved me ahead and it fell on the floor. Never seen him before in my life."

"He—he seen the gun in your hand, you danged fool!" wails Chuck.

"Telescope shoved me," complains Polecat. "It was real money."

"You held him up," croaks Telescope. "You had that gun in your hand, Polecat."

"I didn't hold him up," whines Polecat. "Gun in my hand don't make me a robber. I've got warts on my hands, but that don't make me a frog, does it?"

"Tickets."

It's the conductor again. He punches our ticket, and looks kinda funny at us.

"If you fellers wasn't so darned ignorant I'd put you off," says he.

"If we wasn't so darned ignorant we wouldn't be on here," replies Muley.

I takes the watch out of Polecat's hand, and gives it to the conductor.

"Man in the next car gave it to him," says I, "but we don't want it. Time ain't no object to us."

He looks at the watch, looks at us kinda queer-like, and went away.

"If Telescope hadn't shoved me—" complains Polecat.

"Where do we stop tonight?"

"We don't stop," says Chuck. "We keep right on goin'."

"At night? On this rickety-bang thing? Not me. I'm goin' to make camp the first time she slows up. *Sabe?* I'm gettin' hungry."

"We've got a chuck-car right on this train," says Chuck.

"Don't lie to me," warns Polecat, "I'm older 'n you."

"First call fo' dinnah!" yells a colored feller.

"Whoa," says Chuck, grabbing him by the sleeve. "Where is the feed-car?"

"Three cars to'ards the reah, boss. We picked up the dinah at Belmore."

We has one awful time making Polecat understand, but after while he announces that he's willing to prove us liars. We got back to the car and looks her over. Polecat says to a feller who acts like he owned the place—

"Where's the pump?"

"What kind of a pump?"

"Water-pump," says Polecat. "I want to wash my face."

"Don't be a danged dude," says Telescope, and makes Polecat set down beside him.

The owner puts a slip of paper and a pencil in front of each of us. We looks at the layout, and the feller says—

"Write your orders, please."

"Waiter deaf?" asks Muley.

The feller grins, and then offers to write 'em for us. Polecat said "yes" to everything the feller said, and he had to get a extra slip of paper before Polecat got through agreeing with him. The rest of us confined our wants to one slip. It was good to eat, I'd tell a man. When we got through we gave the waiter two bits per each, and went back to our car to have a smoke. We aint no more than got to rolling our smokes, when that owner of the feed-car shows up and hands us them little slips of paper.

"You forgot to pay for your meal," says he. "You tipped the waiter, but forgot to pay me."

"I never ordered no bill of goods like this," says Polecat. "Six dollars? You made a mistake, pardner."

Mine was four dollars and eighty cents.

"You ate six dollars' worth," says the feller.

"Not me," declares Polecat. "I'd die if I et that much."

"The total of the five checks is $23.50," says the man.

We paid. Then we all shook hands with Jesse James, and told him we hoped to be a posse on his trail some day.

"Next time," says Polecat, "I'm goin' to take my hat in one hand and my gun in the other. Maybe I can pay expenses."

"You ain't goin' up there no more," declares Muley. "As far as I'm concerned, you're hibernated like a bear."

"Archibald eats or Archibald quits," proclaims Polecat.

"Listen, for the sake of your future, Polecat," says Chuck. "The next time you talks about quittin' I'm goin' to hit you so hard that you'll be grub-shy the rest of your days. Quit us? You little, blink-eyed buzzard, you try it."

"Let's throw him off the train and go back home," suggests Muley, "All in favor of ——"

"Wait a minute," begs Polecat. "You can't expect to git somethin' fer nothin', can yuh? You ain't doin' much to earn twenty thousand dollars."

"Twenty thousand and twenty-three dollars and four bits," corrects Muley.

"Danged burglars! Next thing you'll want me to pay fer them three baths, I suppose."

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THAT night we slept settin' up in a seat, and I woke up the next morning with curvature of the spine and a broken neck. We got off at a station and rustled grub enough for the day, and had to listen all day to Polecat's wails about a sandwich which had the bread all warped.

Polecat tried to spread his blankets in the aisle the next night, but the brakeman comes along and raises his voice in objections.

"There must be a place on the train," wails Polecat. "It must be that there is room to bed down. Let's see if we can't locate a roost."

We took our blankets and went ahead through a couple of cars, and then we gets into a car where there ain't no seats. There's a lot of trunks, et cettery, but plenty of room to lay down.

"This must be the warehouse," opines Muley, "but I don't mind.

I'll drink my own Bourbon,
I'll drink my own rye.
If a trunk don't fall on me,
I'll live 'till I die."

"Don't hang your gun on that trunk, Polecat," says Chuck, "It might fall off on your head."

Polecat is standing there in the aisle with his gun in his hand, when all to once a feller rises up from behind a pile of stuff. He's got a bunch of papers in his hand and a pencil behind his ear. He stares at us for a second, and then ducks like a rabbit. Then the lights go out.

"Turn on that glim!" yelps Polecat.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Six times that car roared with mighty explosions, and death and destruction seems to be among us. After the last explosion I ducked for the door, and me and Polecat fought for first place out of there.

"My ——!" wails Polecat, "Ran into a bunch of blasts!" We untangles ourselves and went hippety-hop back to our own car, and finds Telescope, Muley and Chuck ahead of us.

We've got the car to ourselves, being as everybody has gone home to bed, I reckon.

"What was it?" I asks.

"—— poor shootin'," croaks Muley. "Did he think we was tryin' to swipe a trunk, I wonder?"

"I'm goin' to sleep in the aisle," declares Polecat. "I'm goin' to take off my boots, and—uh—say, where can I hang these boots where the pack-rats won't eat the tops off?"

"Hang 'em over that clothes-line," says Telescope, pointing at the cord which runs the length of the car.

Polecat fastens the tops together and tosses 'em over the line.

Bow!

I was standing in the aisle, with my right boot-heel hooked over the arm of a seat, trying to pull the boot off, and I never quit going until I hit the front seat of the car, where I turned over and shoved both feet out of a window. I unhooked myself and got up. I notices that Polecat's boots have left the line, which shows that there must 'a' been some shock. Then I sees Muley's face come up from behind a seat, and he's got a lot of excelsior in his hair, and his face looks like it had shoved something awful hard.

Then Polecat comes creeping out from under a seat, looking like he had lost everything except his eyesight.

"Where's Telescope?" I asks.

"Comin' back," says Telescope, behind me. "I went plumb into the next car. What did we do—hit a cow?"

Just then the conductor comes busting in.

"Who pulled the air?" he yells. "Who done that?"

"Locoed as a loon," says Muley. "How could anybody pull air?"

"Held up!" squeaks a voice, and here comes the feller who yanked the lights out in the storeroom. He's waving one arm and rubbing his shoulder with the other.

"Tried to rob the express car!" he yelps. "I shot 'em six times, and then they pulled the air to make a getaway."

Him and the conductor beats it out of there, and we all sets down and looks at each other.

"Set still," advises Telescope. "Act indifferent."

Pretty soon the conductor comes back through the car.

"Did he kill any of 'em?" asks Muley.

"Not unless they was on the roof. He shot the roof out of his car with six loads of buckshot."

"I thought he was holdin' high," observes Polecat.

"You—uh—eh?"

The conductor stares at Polecat.

"He means that the man must 'a' held high," explains Muley. "If he'd 'a' held low the shot would have went into the floor, don't yuh see?"

"Oh, yes. Any danged fool would know that."

"I wasn't sure," says Muley.

"You —— fool!" hisses Muley, after the conductor leaves. "You thought he was holdin' high, eh? You'll have us all in jail pretty soon."

"They can't jail a man fer just thinkin', can they?"

"I hope not, Polecat," says Muley, "'cause if they could I'd be hung for what I'm thinkin' right now."

A little while after that a feller comes in and sets down with us.

"Just to find out what you know about the attempted robbery of the express car," says he.

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"He, he, he!" cackles Polecat. "What you want to know?"

"Ask me," says Muley.

The feller looks at Polecat, and then says to Muley—

"Who is this feller?"

"Archibald Perkins, who is going to Beverley."

"That so? Know anybody there?"

"Brother," says Polecat. "But he's dead."

"What was his name?"

"Jonathan."

"The millionaire shoe-man?"

"That's him," says Polecat.

The feller sets there quite a while, and then he says—

"I guess that's all," and then he went away.

"Detective," declares Muley. "I seen his star."

"Well," observes Telescope, "he sure got a lot of information about the robbery."

THE next morning, just before noon, we hit Beverley. She's a humdinger of a village, for outside looks. The feller who asks us the questions on the train comes up to Polecat and says—

"You will come with me, please," and he shoves Polecat into a automobile before we can stop him.

"There goes exhibit A," wails Chuck. "Arrested before he got his feet on the ground."

We walked all around the depot, but don't see a soul that we know. Then we picks up our war-sacks and starts down the street. A feller steps in front of us and says—

"Hotel Beverley?"

"Take a chance," advises Telescope, and we all climbs into one of them covered automobiles. We ain't no more than set down when here comes Polecat. He climbs in, pantin' like a winded coyote.

"I bub-bent a gun over his huh-head," says Polecat. "The driver tried to stop me, and we tusseled, but I left him and his danged machine half-inside a female's hat-store. Everybody got excited and I got away. Where we goin' now?"

Just then we stopped in front of a big building, and a man opened the door. We went inside and looked around.

"We've made a mistake," says Muley. "This is where the king lives."

We sets down on a sofy and puts our feet on our sacks. A feller who looks like a mounted policeman comes up to us and says—

"Can I assist you?"

"You might show us where we can find a hotel," says Chuck, and the feller grins and says—

"This is a hotel."

"Deal in rooms?"

"Certainly."

"Deal us one with three beds, will yuh. Polecat's got to sleep alone."

"Will you come and register, please?"

"You're —— well right we will," says Telescope. "This is one time that we don't bite off more than we can chew."

"I can give you a sweet," says the feller at the desk. "I'll take her," says Polecat, but Muley hits him on the hat and shoves him away.

"You'll take nothin'. Mister, you just give us a place to sleep, and if this snake-hunter asks for anything extra you jist kick his feet out from under him. *Sabe?*"

A feller gathers up our war-sacks and takes us over to a little room, which we seems to fill up full. There's a feller setting in there.

"My gosh!" wails Polecat, "What does they think we are—hummin'-birds?"

"Ten," says the feller, and something yanked up like a load of ore. Then we stopped. Polecat has his gun in one hand and his belt-buckle in the other.

"Lemme out!" he wails. "Daw—w—gone yuh, lemme out!"

Muley put his hand over Polecat's mouth, and we went on up, while Polecat hung to his stummick and kept his eyes shut.

We looks around the place and then looks at each other. There's three rooms and a fireplace, and a lot of pictures on the wall.

"What do you reckon they holds us up for this place?" wonders Chuck.

"About thirty dollars a day," says the feller.

"You jokin'?" asks Muley, but the feller shakes his head.

"No, but it may be more now."

"Much obliged," says Telescope. "It looks nice, but we've got our own blankets."

We walked right out of there and Polecat led us right into that hoist without looking. The man yanked the lever and—say, I seen Polecat grab his stummick, and then we hit bottom. The door opens, and we're back where we started from.

"Get out," whispers Telescope. "We're down."

"I—I know it," croaks Polecat. "But I—I wasn't nowhere near ready."

We went right out of there as fast as we can go, and stops at the edge of the sidewalk. A feller says to us—

"Can I take you somewhere?"

"You're the first friendly person we've met," says Muley. "You know where Jonathan Perkins' layout is?"

"Yes."

"We're headed that way," says Chuck.

"Get right in," says he, and the five of us climbs into his automobile. We rode for about three miles, and the feller stops outside of a high stone wall.

"Is this where he lives?" I asks.

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"Well," says he, "I can't go so far as to say that. This is the Beverley cemetery. I usually take my customers where they want to go, and no questions asked."

"Customer?" I asks.

"Sure. Did you think I was doing this for my health? You owe me four dollars and twenty cents."

"To come to a graveyard?" whispers Muley hoarsely.

"Archibald Perkins, it's no wonder your brother Jonathan died. This town would kill anybody."

"Are you—uh—Jonathan Perkins' brother?"

"The same," says Polecat.

"Does anybody know you're here?"

"Nobody's danged business."

"Certainly not," says he. "Certainly not. I was joking about the four dollars and twenty cents. Don't you want to see the cemetery? Beautiful place. I'll tell you what we'll do: You fellows go in and look the place over, and I'll take Mister Perkins around to the entrance in my machine, show him his brother's grave and then come on through and pick you up."

That was fair enough. They drove away, but Telescope objected about going into a graveyard.

"Not me," says he. "That's the last place I ever want to go into. To me there ain't nothin' beautiful about a graveyard. I'm goin' to set right here until they come back."

None of us are very strong for graveyards; so we sets down there in the shade. We ain't been there very long, when along comes a machine just like the one we came in. It sails past us, and Telescope lets out a yelp—

"My —— Didja see him? Didja? Polecat was drivin' that machine."

"You're crazy!" declares Chuck.

"I tell yuh it was," insists Telescope. "Polecat Perkins was drivin' that machine."

"Don't yell so loud," says Muley. "We can hear yuh. Yelpin' at the top of your voice ain't goin' to make us believe any more than a whisper would."

We stands there in the road, arguing about it, when all to once here comes another machine of the some kind, only this one is eating up space like a telegram.

Polecat is there, hanging onto the steering-device, with his mouth wide open, looking straight ahead.

"He's circling the graveyard!" yelps Muley. "Good night, Polecat Perkins."

We hears a crash. Telescope takes off his hat.

"There goes twenty thousand dollars, gents."

"Look!" whoops Muley, and out of the gate comes that machine, or what is left of it. It wobbles over and pokes its nose against a pole, gives a wheeze and quits. Out of the gate comes Polecat. The crown is gone from his derby hat, and one pant leg is torn off at the knee. In his hands he's still got the steering-wheel.

"I—I cut—cut—cut—cut——" he stammers.

"Thinks he's a hen," gasps Muley.

"Cut across," finishes Polecat weak-like. "I—I went around twice but I can't hit the gate; so I jumped the fence."

"Where is the feller who drives it?" I asks.

"Oh, him?" Polecat thinks back that far, and then grins. "He wanted to take me to the Perkins home. Said it would be a good joke on your fellers to make you walk back. I told him to get a laugh out of it, and then I dumped him off the seat. The danged machine was running, and I didn't know how to stop it."

"Let's go," says Chuck. "I don't want to get arrested for hurdle-racin' in a graveyard. Let's get our war-sacks out of the wreck."

"I hope folks *sabe* their own graves," says Polecat, "'cause I sure changed the location of a lot of tombstones."

IT DIDN'T take us long to get tired of walking. It was hot along that road, and when we comes to some bushes Muley suggests that we wait until dark. We cooked some feed with Polecat's camp-outfit, and it sure tasted good. As soon as it gets dark we starts on again. We ain't gone far when we sees the lights of a automobile coming up the road.

"Here's where we ride," says Telescope.

We did. It's a gosh-awful big machine—one of them kind all closed in like a house, with the driver out on the front porch. The feller inside is a skinny little pelican, with a awful sharp face. He's got the slickest clothes I ever seen—even got them cloth things over the top of his shoes.

"May I ask what you stopped me for?" asks he, mean-like.

"We'll ride with yuh," says Telescope. "You've got plenty of room," and we all piled in with our sacks.

"I really don't understand," says he, nervous-like.

"Just go ahead and we'll take care of us," says Chuck. "We just want to get to town."

"But I'm not going to town," says he.

"We don't care where you go," says Telescope. "We're tired of walkin'. All we want is a place where we can buy a drink."

He picks up a thing what looks like a hose, and says into it, "Go on, Peters."

"You've got a nice graveyard out here," says Polecat. "I've been all around and through it."

The feller just glances at Polecat, but don't say a word.

"Does them things keep your ankles warm?" asks Muley.

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"I'd sweat in 'em," says Polecat. "Your feet sweat easy?"

The feller sort of gargles and looks up at the light in the ceiling of the car.

"Reminds me of a sheepherder I knowed oncet," says Polecat. "He'd set all day and never say a word. One time—" but just then we drove up to a house and stopped. A man opened the door, and we all follered the little feller inside and up the stairs.

Man, there's something going on in there. Men and women, all drinkin' and playing on gambling-devices. She's wilder than Dawson City in the old days, but dressed different.

A chinless *hombre* is trying to sing a song, but nobody seems to enjoy him. He sees the feller with us, and he weaves over where we are.

"I came to take you home, Reginald," says our guide. "This place is to be raided tonight. Understand?"

"Go home yourshelf," says Reginald. "Thish is no place for respectable lawyer. Go home, Geoffrey, and tell your wife she wants you," and then he weaves back to the tables.

"The drunken fool!" squeaks the little feller.

"Let's have a drink," says Telescope.

"I do not drink," declares Geoffrey. "You'll enjoy it," says Muley. "I wish it was my first experience."

I'll draw a veil over the next fifteen minutes. Geoffrey drank a small glass of beer—with two drinks of hooch in it—and inside of five minutes he's telling us all his past life. He tells us that he is Andrew Geoffrey, the greatest corporation-lawyer in the State. He has another shot of temptation, and then he confides that he's likely the biggest corporation-lawyer on earth. That *hombre* sure covered a lot of ground.

"Who is the drunk you're tryin' to save?" asks Muley. "Tha's Reginald Harrison Perkins, son of the late Jonathan Perkins. I'm retained by the estate."

"Jonathan was my brother," says Polecat, tearful-like.

Andy shuts one eye tight and grins at Polecat. Then he shakes his head.

"Sh-h-h-h," says he. "Woods 'r full of 'm. You're number sheven."

"That's too bad," says Chuck, wiggling his ears. "I didn't know they run in flocks. Do we imbibe over our disappointment?"

"In wine," says Andy. "Waiter, bring us fi' quarts."

We got it. That waiter gives us a wash-tub full of ice and bottles, and we elects Telescope bartender. He grabs a bottle and starts to take the bailing-wire off the top.

Bam!

Something hit Polecat between the eyes, and he went over backward and came up with a gun in his hand. Telescope stands there sprinkling everybody, and just then somebody yelps:

"Police! Police!" and into the door comes a million of 'em.

"Shave me!" weeps Andy! "Shave me! I forgot 'em."

"This is no barber-shop," yelps Telescope, and sails that wine-bottle straight at the law-and-order mob.

Then some wise *hombre* cut off the lights, and —— takes a recess. Man, it was some stampede!

"Save Andy!" yells Telescope. "Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes."

I dove across the table and got Andy around the waist with one arm, and with my other hand I got a bottle of wine. We went some. I took him across a defunct roulette-table, under another table, and then we hit the door. Lucky? Well, I reckon we was. I yanks Andy outside, slammed my bottle back into the whirlpool, and then me and Andy took one step and went into space.

Comes a awful jolt, the smashing of wood and glass, and when I gets my eyes straight again I finds myself setting in a automobile beside a policeman, and I can look right up through the roof where we came in. I've got my arms around this officer, but he's been hit so hard he don't care.

"Did I get you by mistake?" I asks, but all he does is to open his lips and say:

"Move on. You can't loaf here."

I got out and looked around. I can see where we came out. Part of that verandy rail is hanging down, and there's a lot of house-plants scattered over the grass. There is plenty of things going on up-stairs. I hears Telescope's voice yelping for Muley to hang on to Andy, and then a whole bunch of 'em surges out of the same door.

"Drop him and then jump," grunts Chuck, but that weak little verandy saved 'em the trouble. They all lit in a heap on the grass, where they untangles slow-like.

"My gosh, that was some battle!" gasps Muley. "Where is Andy's automobile?"

"Take this one," says I, and we manages to get everybody inside. The seats are built along the sides in this one.

"Who can drive?" asks Telescope. "Hurry before the police get down here. Can you drive, Andy?"

Andy is too stewed to talk, but he nods. We shoves him onto the seat, and away we go.

"Where did you get the policeman?" asks Muley.

"I got him by mistake," I yells. "Drop him on to a soft place."

Telescope picked him up and eased him into the brush along the road, but the policeman didn't mind. He just grinned.

We went some, with chances pretty big that we'd go faster.

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"Where's Polecat?" yells Muley. "Have we lost him again?"

"Stop!" yelps Chuck. "We've got to go back after Polecat."

"Stop it yourself," yelps Polecat's voice. "I don't know how."

"Where's Andy?" I yells.

"Under my feet. He was too drunk to drive anything. Where's the thing you stop her with?"

I reckon he finds out. They've been sprinkling the street along there, and Polecat manages to lock our wheels.

"Pardners for a waltz!" howls Muley, and I'm betting that we turned around ten times.

"Kick off that brake!" yelps Telescope.

Bang! We goes ahead like a shot, and that engine sounds like forty shotguns all going off to once.

"Where you goin'?" whoops Muley, as Polecat comes clawing over the top of us. "Where you goin', feller?"

"I'm goin' to jump off the hind end," yells Polecat. "The front end is goin' too fast."

Just then we seems to elevate our front end, and then the hind end kicks up just in time to land us against the ceiling, and then we starts over the ocean waves.

"Pow-w-w-der River!" yelps Polecat. I got Muley around the waist, thinking that maybe he'd sort of anchor me, but the fat son of a gun has got more bounce in him than I have.

Then we turned a handspring.

MULEY swore that the police found me and him in the top of a tree, but I don't believe it. Trees don't grow that high. Anyway, I woke up, hearing Telescope's voice telling me to quit singing.

"The jailer said he'd put you under the pump if you didn't quit," says he.

I looks around—with one eye; the other is swelled shut. Chuck and Muley are setting against the wall, and Telescope is standing, leaning on the bars.

"Did we drive right into jail?" I asks.

"Might as well," groans Telescope. "Did you just wake up? You've been singin' for seven hours."

"What are we in jail for?" I asks.

"Stealing a taxicab, assaulting the driver, refusin' to pay fare, assaultin' policemen, and last but not least—absconding with the police-patrol," enumerates Muley, sad-like.

"Amen," says Chuck. "Paradise was saddle-marked before this village ever felt a rope. Reckon they'll hang us?"

"I don't care what they do, just so they don't make me set down," says Telescope. "I slid two hundred yards on the seat of my pants, and when them policemen found me I was on fire."

"Polecat—where is he?" I asks.

"Among the missin'," says Telescope. "Him and Andy was so light they never came down, I reckon. I can't say that I give a dang."

Just then a couple of officers comes to the door and unlocks it.

"Do we get our choice between shootin' and hangin'?" asks Chuck.

"Not quite that bad," grins one of 'em. "You feel like leavin' town? There's a train out in an hour. Know what I mean?"

"I hope it goes fast," says Telescope. "Is there any law that says we can't walk down the track and pick it up when it comes along?"

"Use your own judgment."

"Not me," grins Chuck. "I tried it once, and look where we are. Who got us loose?"

"Don't argue!" snaps Telescope. "Andy's a big lawyer. Him and the law must stand together."

Them two fellers grins at each other, and watches us hit for the open country. A kid asks us to buy a paper, and Muley took one. We humped up in a corner of the depot and waited for the train.

"Look at this!" snorts Muley. "Polecat! Look at it!" There she is, in big, black letters:

SAYS HE IS ARCHIBALD PERKINS

Westerner Claims to Be the Brother of Late Millionaire. Detective Brady May Win Big Reward.

And then it goes on to say that this detective has been searching all over the West for Archibald, and trailed him from the hills of Montana to a road-house near Beverley. Brady is to produce his proofs today. It also says that the alleged Archibald Perkins seems to be suffering from some kind of shock, and has tried to escape. Refuses to talk.

"Boys," says Muley, "we're goin' to get Polecat and take him back to his dugout."

A feller showed us where the Perkins house was, and we sure went up there real fast. The beauty of it don't appeal to us, and we don't ask no questions. Telescope just opened the front door, and we all went in. A fat feller, with a swaller-tailed coat seen us coming, and he almost throwed a fit.

"I—I beg your pardon," says he.

"You're excused," says Telescope. "Lead us to the owner of the place, and do it quick."

He sure hurried fast. We went upstairs and stops in front of a big door.

There sets Polecat beside a table, and beside him is Brady. Across the table sets Andy and another *hombre* of the same breed. There's a old lady, with her glasses on a handle, and in another chair sets Reginald, looking like he'd rather have a drink then anything else.

There ain't a word spoken for a moment, and then Polecat says—

"They—they want me to take my shirt off."

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"Now, I asks yuh to all set still," says Telescope, patting his old six-gun on his hip, and then he turns to Brady and says—

"You danged crook!"

"Ahem-m-m-m!" says Andy. "Crook, did you say?"

"Yes. He's tryin' to pry you loose from ten thousand dollars. This feller's name is Perkins, but that lets him out. I've knowed him for ten years."

"They wanted me to take off my shirt," complains Polecat.

"Then," says Andy, "you know positively that this is not Archibald Perkins."

"Cinch," says Telescope. "Come on, Polecat, we've got to catch a train."

"Wait a minute," says Brady. "I want to tell you——"

"You and your effete East can go to ——" says Polecat. "I'm goin' back West where a man can get killed without gettin' all bunged up. *Adios.*"

WE CAUGHT that train. After deducting our fare, we've still got enough to eat on. We got into the smoking-car, and eased our carcasses onto the cushions.

"No more dishonesty for mine," sighs Chuck. "I'm just goin' on bein' a plain cowpuncher, with no ambitions beyond pay-day. It don't pay to promote wild-cats."

"Nor Polecats," grins Muley.

"I thanks you for rescuin' me," says Polecat. "I shudders to think what might 'a' happened if you hadn't showed up. Why, I wouldn't live there for all the money in the world. Accordin' to what that feller read, I'd 'a' had to live in that house and in that —— killem-quick town. Live there? Not me. I'm too happy in my little, old dugout. What's money?"

"She ain't much with us," agrees Muley.

"You didn't need to worry, Polecat," says Telescope. "They'd never accepted you, anyway."

"The real Archibald Perkins had a birthmark on his back," says Polecat, slow-like. "It looks like a raspberry. That's why they wanted me to take off my shirt."

"Well, they'd 'a' found out their mistake," grunts Muley.

"Like —— they would!"

We all stares at Polecat and then at each other.

"You mean——?" gasps Chuck.

"I couldn't stand the conditions," says Polecat, "so I kept my danged shirt on."

A Gulp of Water

by Lynn Montross

Author of "In the Dark"

THE medical science has its own measure of a man. It knows to an almost exact degree just how much of this and how much of that the human body can stand and still retain a beating of the heart. It knows, for instance, that there is but little variation in the amount of fever required to scorch out the life of one man and the amount that will bring to an end the mortal career of another.

But science has practically stopped at that point. It has never determined tests and experiments that were calculated to measure the spirit of a man—that abstract spark from within that almost overleaps death itself and rises triumphant from the shroud.

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For there's seldom anything in a man's appearance by which you can accurately gage his spirit. Your cursing, swashbuckling pirate may in reality be a faint skulker who's crushed at his first reverse. The hunchback cobbler who mends your shoes may be a giant.

There is a story told by seamen who are familiar with the South Seas which goes to prove that the size of a man's body, his age or his appearance have little to do with the mighty spark from within which dominates him.

Banana Island, so the story runs, is a small one even as South Sea Islands go. It is quite a distance from the beaten paths of commerce but trading-vessels from Papeete come to its tiny, coral-studded harbor a few times each year to put on a load of smelly copra. Outside of these visits white men are seldom seen there. The place is so utterly insignificant and out of the way that few know of its existence.

The isle has an area of perhaps ten square miles and a population of several hundred natives. It has about the usual assortment of violent odors, tangled foliage and greasy heat characteristic of the region.

As you set foot on the sandy beach of Banana Island you know immediately that you are in a spot of enchantment, a spot hidden away from the rest of the world. Banana-trees, with huge, ragged leaves are in a thicket close to the shore. Meandering its way through them is a little path that leads to the one village on the isle.

You follow the path with a feeling that you are the first white man who ever set foot there. The air is sickly sweet with the scent of great white flowers underfoot. Graceful coconut - palms, mangoes and flamboyants mingle in a riot of scarlet and yellow through which the intense blue of the sky can be seen.

Banana Island resembles the place of which the poet sang in that "only man is vile." You realize this fact as you follow the path and approach the clearing. A sickening stench assails your nostrils from countless coconuts split in two and placed in the sun by the native women. There are other odors, less powerful perhaps, but fully as nauseous.

You see a collection of thatched shacks. Lolling about in them or just outside are the natives, herded together in gaping indolence. Just to the rear of the shacks stands a two-room bungalow of unpainted wood almost hidden by the coconut-palms. This is the residence of old Motu, the king of Banana Island.

At a glance it could be seen that Motu was of different blood from the rest of the natives. His wrinkled skin was lighter in color and his features sharper. Some say that he had a dash of Chinese blood, others aver that he was part white.

He had landed on the island from parts unknown some twenty years before. Before he'd been there a week he displayed a decided talent for government. Without any violence he induced the former king to abdicate. He took control and gave Banana Island the only peace and prosperity that the forsaken spot had ever known.

Motu didn't make much of a kingly appearance. He could not have been more than five feet tall and appeared to be at least seventy years of age. Naked except for a *pareo* of trade-cotton about his loins, his grimacing face lined with deep furrows and with one arm withered and helpless at his side, he resembled a crippled chimpanzee more than a human being.

Yet there was something regal about the results he achieved. Weak as he was physically, the old man ruled the island for a score of years without any of the natives trying to deny his authority. It remained for the white man to bring old Motu to grief.

THE trading-ship had left the island on the night before on its way back to Tahiti. But two men of its motley crew stayed behind.

Morning broke bright and hot, the sticky heat of the tropics. The two men were sleeping soddenly on the beach. About them droning flies buzzed a lulling accompaniment to the lazy swish of the waves. An occasional breeze wafted the sickening smell of drying copra from the interior of the island.

Eaves, the cockney, shook the man beside him, a renegade beach-comber from the States who went by the name of Powell.

"Blime," he growled, "if you wants a swig for an eye-opener, you better come to life."

The two of them finished the square black bottle to the last fiery drop.

Eaves was pretty well known in the South Seas. Dark and unsavory tales were told of him. The natives bore him a respect liberally tinged with fear. Nobody was just certain as to how he made the money that enabled him to indulge in his long-drawn, hideous drunks at Papeete and other ports.

Powell was his boon companion. Questions concerning a body's past are never asked among derelict white men in the South Seas, but it was whispered that Powell was a half-breed and had left the States shortly after a murder on the Dakota reservation.

"I'm —— well thinkin'," said the cockney, after he had returned from throwing a dash of salt water in his face, "that we ought to gone back with the ship to Papeete."

"No," answered Powell. "No such thing. I got this straight from one of the natives in Tahiti. The old bird that runs this island has been trading in copra for fifteen or twenty years. He runs his outfit of natives and none of 'em gets a cent of what he takes in. The old

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boy salts it down for himself. He's got a fortune in pearls, the native tells me, hid away somewheres around here. Now if you an' me——"

"There ain't no bloomin' 'if' about it," the cockney interrupted with a crafty gleam in his little eyes. "Any pearls around here an' we'll make the ol' blighter tell where they're hid. Lots of ways to make 'em talk, myte!"

The renegades aroused themselves from their bed in the sand and waded in to where their boat was. They paddled it over a few hundred feet to where a thicket crept over the water's edge and carefully concealed it with leaves.

"There, we're set," approved Powell. "All ready for a quick getaway."

The two men took the path that led to the village. At a distance they could hardly be distinguished from natives. Both were clad only in the *pareo*—a strip of trade-cotton about the loins and hanging to the knees—and between sunburn and dirt were quite brown. Their hair and beards were long and unkempt.

As they neared the collection of thatched huts, several of the natives met them. None of the blacks showed the least suspicion of the white men. They had dealt only with traders before and did not know the wiles and treachery that the beach-comber can sometimes display in the South Seas. Without any parley they took Eaves and Powell up to old Motu's dwelling. The old man was waiting in the doorway to greet them when they got there.

"He ain't no bloomin' South Sea native," whispered Eaves. "The blighter's got white or Chink blood."

Powell struck up an ogling acquaintance with one of the native women while Eaves, who was the only one of the two familiar with Motu's several dialects, entered the hut. After a few moments Eaves reappeared and the two were ceremoniously led to an empty hut by the old man and told it was theirs as long as they were the guests of Banana Island.

Old Motu beamed upon them. It was evident that he placed full trust in them and took a simple pride in his hospitality.

"What'd you find out?" Powell asked eagerly, as soon as the two were alone in the hut.

"The ol' blighter's goin' to be easy for the likes of me an' you," Eaves answered with a sly grin. "I tells him the ship went away and left us but that we was going to rest for a day, then hit out in our boat. He takes it all in."

Powell went to the door of the hut and sniffed.

"You can tell they're drying lots of copra here," he said, "an' there's good money in it these days. Bet the old bird's got enough money salted away to get us out of these —— islands."

Powell licked a parched lip at the thought of the liquor in square-faced bottles that money would buy. He made a little hole in the thatched wall and lay down with his eye glued to the opening.

"Sooner the better," he said with an ominous twist of the lip.

POWELL knew the indolent habits of the tropics. He knew that the natives were more than usually torpid from the roast-pig feast they had gorged at on the night before. By noon the heat from the overhead sun was terrific. An immense solitude brooded over the coconut-palms. All the inmates of the huts were in the shade, asleep.

Powell gave a final inspection through his peep-hole and turned away with a satisfied look.

"Now's our time!" he whispered savagely, wiping a rivulet of perspiration from his grimy forehead. "Everybody's snoozin'. We'll just step out like we're goin' for a drink."

The two renegades leisurely walked over toward Motu's shack. In the doorway sat a sentry, his head on his chest, sound asleep. Powell and Eaves noiselessly slipped past him and entered the hut.

Five minutes later they were hurrying down a little path toward the seashore, carrying old Motu, who was bound hand and foot. Back in the hut the guard lay, a ragged rent in his throat. It had taken but a little while and not a soul had awakened.

"Here's the place," muttered Powell, pointing ahead to a secluded clump of banana-trees almost within reach of the lazy waves. "Nothin' can be heard here. Them natives won't wake up till sundown anyway."

Old Motu, who couldn't have weighted more than ninety pounds, was unceremoniously dumped to the ground like a sack of meal. The two white men wasted little time on preliminaries. Eaves bent down and hissed in the old man's ear.

"Where's them pearls?" he demanded in a native dialect.

Old Motu's face twisted into a grimace of ferocity. His black eyes met Eaves' with a murderous gleam, but he didn't so much as open his lips. The cockney straightened up with a curse and deliberately kicked his victim in the face.

For the next ten minutes Powell and Eaves took turns beating and kicking the tightly bound king of Banana Island. Old Motu received the blows without a groan or showing the least expression of pain on his features. He lay among the leaves so still that it seemed he had no nerves. The two men constantly drilled into his ears the same question—

"Where's them pearls?"

Motu's only answer was a look of contempt from his narrowed black eyes.

In sheer exhaustion the two renegades

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desisted. Powell looked at his companion in puzzled desperation.

"What if——"

"We've got to," Eaves interrupted. "Got to give him the water-cure. Know what that is? You pour water down a man till he either busts or gives in. Hate to do that even to a native, but we want them pearls."

The cockney searched around in the bushes until he found an old coconut-shell. He took it to the near-by shore and brought it back brimming-full of salt-water. Then he picked up a hollow section of bamboo and trimmed it with his knife.

Motu lay motionless among the leaves and vines, but his eyes followed every move with a gleam of understanding. It was evident that he realized what was impending, but he showed no fear.

Eaves put his knee on old Motu's thin chest and began to insert the bamboo between the aged victim's tightly clenched teeth. It took the efforts of both men for a full five minutes before the hollow section was finally in the old man's mouth.

The cockney made a funnel out of a large leaf. Powell began slowly to pour the acrid salt-water down the king's throat, tightly gripping his nose so that he would have to swallow in order to breathe.

A picture of the terrible moments to come must have flashed through Motu's brain, but his eyes still gleamed defiance.

He even shook his head in a decided negative when, after the whole shell of water had been poured down his throat, Eaves again asked him the location of the pearls with a promise of freedom if he told.

After the refusal Powell went down to the seashore and returned with the coconut-shell filled with more salt-water. One forced gulp after another the burning contents were poured down the old man's tortured throat. At times the victim choked and strangled as some of the fluid was involuntarily drawn into his lungs. But he firmly shook his head when Powell came to the last few drops in the shell and the cockney put the question to him again.

"Blime, he's got nerve!" Eaves exclaimed with grudging admiration, wiping the streams of sweat from his face.

More salt-water was brought. Powell gripped old Motu's nose between a horny thumb and forefinger. He poured the water into the funnel with infinite slowness so that the victim would feel the increasing pain more acutely.

Several times Powell had to stop his pouring while the writhing old man coughed and retched. But after the question had been asked and no answer obtained, the two persecutors kept on remorselessly until the last drop had disappeared from the bottom of the shell.

"He can't last much longer," said Eaves in a tone that was far from confident. "He's got to give in."

But the cockney dropped his eyes from the flaming look given him by his victim.

BY THIS time old Motu's stomach was distended so abnormally that he appeared as a hideous, misshapen gnome. His breath came in moaning, wheezing gasps as each nerve in his abdomen shrieked a protest against the torture. The horrible enlargement of his stomach barely left room for his heart and lungs to function. But the aged victim's eyes were alive with contempt and hatred.

Powell came back with a fourth shell of sea-water and the torture was resumed.

A drop or two at a time the bitter fluid trickled down old Motu's throat until it seemed that the victim must burst from the terrible pressure from within. Powell's hand was beginning to tremble so that he often spilled the water on the ground. Suddenly he stopped and dropped the shell.

"My ——!" he said hoarsely. "We've got to quit—for a while anyway. I can't pour any more."

Motu lay without moving in the tangled foliage, a bloated monstrosity seemingly more dead than alive, excepting for his flaming eyes.

With a sort of awe Eaves took out his knife and cut the cords that bound the victim's gnarled wrists. The old man gasped and feebly rolled over on his side.

"Aye," said the cockney, a fearful note in his voice. "It's —— well time that we got out of this —— place. Let's make for the boat."

The two renegades stopped for a final look at their victim. Then happened the incident that is still told when men gather around beach-fires in the South Seas.

With a terrible groan old Motu slowly brought his agonized form up to a sitting-position. Before the spellbound gaze of the two white men the native reached over and grasped the coconut-shell at their feet in which there still remained a few swallows of water.

He tremblingly brought the shell up to his bleeding lips. Then he closed his eyes and with a tremendous effort took one—two—three large gulps of salt-water.

He threw the shell away—drained empty.

Eaves and Powell gave one ghastly look into the old man's flaming eyes. They turned and ran.

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TOYAMA

A five-part story conclusion

by Patrick Casey

Author of "According to His Caste," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI

CASUALS OF THE SAND

MARIQUITA'S voice drifted away and I became aware once more of the slight creaking of her saddle, the crunch of the horse's hoofs. But that crunching was not nearly so loud nor so brittle-sounding as before. We had left the blinding salt bog behind and in comparison the gleam of the sand was almost a relief. Though we were heading as it seemed full into the coppery concave of sky and sun, the refractive, diathermanous haloid crystals were no longer beneath to fuse the air with stifling heat.

"Mariquita," I said, "I thank you for the trust you have placed in me. After your experiences with Dicenta, I wonder you should ever part with one of your weapons. I appreciate, now that I have heard your story, just what it meant when you loaned me this Colt.

"But," I added, as she thanked me with her large humidly splendid eyes, "what does Metztli, ahead there, think to do on this expedition, when he is carrying only that mouse-carved knife and gift fan in his breech-clout and the water-gourd swinging behind? His lack of adequate armament has been puzzling me for some time. Does he mean, with sacerdotal sanctity, to take no active part, but to play the safe rôle of directing things from the sidelines?"

She showed surprize, lifting her patrician brows into a tiny knuckle over the nose.

"Why don't you know?" she queried: "But of course not; your pardon, *caballerete:* Metztli only divulged his plan to me as we rode out together from the cañon. It is this, *señor*. He intends to come to close quarters with that saffron priest of the Japanese and stab him to death with that knife of the mouse. Metztli is haughtily and excessively furious over the impudence of these yellow men and especially the smooth lip-lying of the priest."

I was gazing contemplatively toward the zebra-striped Metztli ambling a stone's throw ahead on the reddish cob. Through the white stabbing light and quivering heat waves of the sandy flat we were traversing, I could make out in the radiant distance a patch of trees. They looked in the molten eye of the sun like palms drooping with fans of gold.

"Metztli's plan is all well and good," I remarked judicially, "providing we ever come to close quarters with the Japanese *bonze*. But it's my idea that Suzunoya-no-Koji is too infernally clever to allow of anything like that. Besides, there are those sleek white mice which he carries in the high crown of his Korean hat. Those mice filled me with a real fear last night, I'll tell you. I believe they are poisonous and likely to crawl down his blue robe and after a person, like creatures who scent and prey."

I thought I detected a movement ahead among the patch of palms. On account of the light rays and sparkling air, I could not be sure; but I thought I saw a dark object like a smallish man or some large bird pegging among the growths. While peering ahead in an attempt to make it out, I asked Mariquita a question that had been poised on my tongue for some time.

"In your troubles in Mexico, Mariquita," I said, "there was a Japanese merchant involved,

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who did business under the same sign of the mouse as this mysterious party here. What do you judge from that? Did you ever hear," I swung toward her, "of Toyama?"

She shook her sombreroed head vehemently.

"No, I never did. And I never learned the meaning of that odd sign-board, as Dicenta himself did not appear to know. I only know that when the mouse sign reappeared again through the agency of this Japanese *bonze* and his strange party, it recalled treachery and misfortune to me and instinctively I distrusted every one connected with it."

"Then even Dicenta did not know!" I ejaculated. "I was wondering about that. I was wondering if Dicenta had any deeper bond with the Japanese *comerciante* than the mere use of him as a f——"

I sucked in the word, "fence." The black object ahead was hopping forward, over the sand, very fast and jerkily. On a sudden, its wings fluttered out, great black coffin wings, and it lifted into the air, an enormous sable condor with predatory bald head and frill of white feathers about the base of the neck. Another, somewhat smaller, the female, soared up from the other side of the patch of palms.

"Mariquita!" I exclaimed sharply. "Ahead there, I think, is that poor Japanese girl of the mirage!"

A man came running out of the palm patch even as I spoke. It was his movement that had disturbed the close-hovering vultures. He came loping and hallooing over the hot sands towards us, a clay-coated Indian, his mask off and hanging from about his neck, his black thick strands of hair dangling stiffly behind him in the rush of his hurry. We dug heels into the flanks of pony and stallion, and drew alongside Metztli as he bore down on the scout.

The fellow talked fast, amid pantings, his black eyes glittering in the sunlight with excitement. He had been one of Quetzal's squad of eight who had immediately preceded us. They had espied the Japanese girl running, with those absurd little toed-in steps, across the hummocks off to one side and far from her countryfolk's encampment.

Quetzal had detailed this scout, Acolhua, to trail the girl and determine what she was about. Then Quetzal and the others had taken the scout's horse in tow and ridden on for the mesquite flat, sanguine, in the knowledge that the war-force behind would shortly come up and lend the pursuing scout whatever aid might be needed.

The girl had toppled over in the sand, exhausted from running and from thirst. It was that which we had observed in the mirage of the Salina. Acolhua, the scout, had half-carried, half-dragged the unconscious girl to the *pozo Rubio* among the yucca palms ahead. There, from the Ruby Well, he had dripped water on her tongue and laved the round chubby face until she had shown signs of quickening life.

She was still too weak to raise her head, but in swift short whispers she had attempted to breathe something to him, he was not sure what. He surmised that it was thanks for his kindness, or else some account of herself. He hadn't been able to understand a single word, as her whispers were in a strange language he never before had heard. She seemed, Acolhua ended, very excited and fear-filled.

WE SPURRED on over the sandy flat, the scout running alongside, one hand grasping a thick fillet of the mane of Metztli's cob. Overhead, slowly and heavily on sepulchral wings, the two condors circled, brooding and persistent as death. They had been attracted no doubt by the immobility of the girl as, contrary to the usual belief, these scavengers judge their prey by sight rather than through scent. Our movement, the glint of so many bronze bodies and steel guns, the beat and crunching of the horses, the rising cloud of dust, frightened the vultures. Without any flutter of the great wings, they soared up into the higher reaches and with fearsome majesty sailed away.

I made out as we drew close that the golden-fanned trees were really that species of yucca called Joshua, which springs up with sheathed palm-like trunks and throws out clusters of long bayonet-sharp leaves. Among the trees was a pool of water, coated over by a myriad of insects, red as ruby grains, from which no doubt the well derived its name.

The tiny Japanese maid was lying in the leguminous plants which hedged the pool, a dainty bundle of rosy silk among the green. Her head was tilted up a bit by the high polished chignon of hair, blue-black as hyacinth; the small soft round face looked aureolin in color, a smooth golden yellow, glossy now with the moist residue of the laving water; and her eyes were closed, the thin black curve of brows forming two delicate ellipses with the upslanted penciling of lashes.

Come of the crackling and squashing of the horses' hoofs in the fretful creepers, she opened wide the jet-dark eyes.

"Red spots!" she cried in recovered voice and good English, her eyes glassy as if lacking full sensibility, one absurdly tiny hand lifting to her face as if to drive away some tormenting vision.

"O Kwannon, the red spots, red spots!" And a ripple shook through the rosy silk as if with shuddering.

Mariquita looked down at the girl, tenderness and stark perplexity struggling for supremacy in her eyes. Metztli and the scout hovered close, their jaws slack. None of them understood English, I instantly surmised, and were

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accordingly at a loss to know what the Japanese girl was saying. I leaned over the little figure and put a hand upon one throbbing hot temple.

"It's all right, *Dede San*," I spoke softly, using the term, Miss Young Girl, as often I had heard it used in the Japanese quarter of San Francisco. "Do not fear. You are among friends and the red spots need no longer plague you."

Her eyes, those black slant eyes of an older culture, took on the point of concentrating thought. She lay for a moment very still, looking up at me. Then all at once, she smiled, twin dimples indenting her cheeks like frail tiny golden cups wrought by some delicate tool.

"You speak English," she said with a kind of lisp and as if remarking a great and surprizing truth.

I nodded.

"And you speak English, too," I said, chiming in with her mood. "You must have been educated in Hawaii."

She showed strength enough to nod her head.

"I went to the schools of Hawaii Nei," she answered. "I was in the fifth reader; yet I could not make him understand, that man there with the white coat like Buddh dressed up for a feast day." She swung her head on its cushion of black glossy hair, in order to look toward the slack-jawed Acolhua.

It struck me, thereat, that perhaps she had smiled up at me in whimsical mirth at my own appearance, so much like a story-book pirate's, with white kerchief wrapped round my red head, army breeches buttoned at the knees, shanks bare, and flat heelless *teguas* broadening my feet. But undaunted, pointing my questions more pertinently, I queried——

"What is your name, *Dede?*"

"O Haru San," she dimpled again.

Mystified by her previous fear, I wanted to learn about the red spots; but because of her weakened state I refrained from asking so evidently disturbing a question. I waited, smiling rather vacuously down at her.

Suddenly and with childlike trust, she put out one baby hand to me and, surmising her wish, I aided her to a sitting-position. As I did, the slim pyramid of pale yucca bells, which had remained entangled all along in her high polished chignon, fell to the ground. I stooped and returned the sprig. With the unabashed nonchalance of a child in truth, she fastened it once more in her hyacinthine hair.

"*Arigato*," she said with aspirated accent, then recollecting herself, "Thank you, *San*."

Judging now from all this that she was quite recuperated, I felt compelled to ask:

"But these red spots you speak of, O Haru San. What are they? Why do you so fear them?"

Her lips quivered like trembling cherries.

"They are on his mice," she shuddered, "those white mice with the red spots! You know him—" suddenly—"the Koji with the long blue robe, twin mustaches and high hat?"

"I walked and talked with him last night," I returned quickly.

"Well, he called me *O Neko San*," she went on in a flood of swift speech, the words merging lispingly—"*O Neko San*, which is a *yobi-na* of endearment meaning Honorable Miss Kitten. He also called me *anata bakari*, as much as to say there was no one in the world like me, that all the rest were as rubbish. He wanted to marry me and take me to live, in the real California, in a *toyo-kan*—a gilded oriental house where big paper lanterns would gleam among the papaia-trees, and jewel beetles and golden-crested *iiadaki* would flit about, and little bridges would curve over babbling streams in which the goldfish played.

"But there were red spots on his white mice this morning, and those horrible mice ran up and down his sleeves and I was afraid. I waited till he left for the beach and then I fled. I have been running over the hot sands in these poor straw sandals ever since, without a morsel of food or drop of water, though often I called on Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy, for help. *O San*, I don't want to go back! I don't want to marry the Koji. I'm afraid, afraid of his white mice with the ugly red spots!" And she shuddered again.

"You won't have to, O Haru," I sought to calm her. "We're going to do all we can to thwart the Retired Scholar and his plans. But tell me about these red spots. You know I saw the mice on Suzunoya last night when I walked and talked with him. They were then sleekly white, save for the red eyes. Do you mean," I asked with sharp thought, "that their eyes are red spots?"

She shook her head so that the yucca bells shivered.

"No, no! They are spots, ruby spots mottling the white coats of the mice, spots many and red as those insects in the well there."

"But why does Suzunoya-no-Koji have the mice anyway? What is the meaning of this sign of the white mouse? Tell me, O Haru San," I brought my question to an issue; "what is Toyama?"

She drew swiftly away from me. She looked up, stark fear widening the slant black eyes.

"Toyama?" she repeated, drawing her breath in audibly. "Toyama means Big Mountain!"

Her small pudgy hands were braced behind her back and she was gazing up at me with the acute stare of one attempting to force belief. A pallor had sucked the golden tint from her aureolin skin.

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I KNEW then. She had not precisely told an untruth. She had translated into English for me the literal meaning of the word Toyama. But I was certain with a mighty certitude that there was still another meaning, a secret meaning known only to the initiate. She knew that second meaning, but was striving arduously to force me to believe this overglib translation.

I felt pitted, thereat, against the natural and uncanny subtlety of the Oriental mind. It was strongly reminiscent of driving a bargain with an Asiatic over the purchase of some precious old rug or bit of rare lace. A price had been cited as an opening wedge, a preposterously exorbitant price.

It was up to me to show suave disinterest, or else such stout inside knowledge of the fact that the cited amount was merely bait for the extravagant and gullible as would force the Oriental, after some haggling, to mention the real sane bed-rock price.

In the case of this child of the East—she was barely more than fifteen years of age I judged—I must show that I knew, for a surety, that she had given me only the literal meaning of Toyama as a cover beneath which to conceal the secondary and sinister signification. I must evidence such an amount of in-the-know as would force her to reveal certain secrets of Toyama.

I shook my kerchief-wrapped head in gentle displeasure and reproof.

"You mistake, O Haru San," I said. "I am already aware that Toyama means Big Mountain. But that is its translation to the letter. I want the other meaning, the figurative meaning. What does it represent, what kind of religious sect or association of dark purposes is this thing called——"

"How you know that?" she breathed sharply, her expression stilted, her slant black eyes distended wider with astonishment than ever they had been with fear.

I chuckled with brave show of knowledge.

"As I told you, O Haru San, I walked with Suzunoya-no-Koji last night. He divulged to me then much about Toyama!"

Her brows knitted into a delicious knuckle of vast perplexity.

"But the Koji himself, he say not to mention it to a soul," she spoke out her thoughts. "I can't understand why he should tell you, *O San*. You say you walked with him last night?"

I nodded, at least in this case, with truthful affirmation.

"Then you are the man in the sand, the one who escaped from the gov'mint ship! You are an agent of the United States gov'mint. Of all men, *O San*, you should never know Toyama."

"But I am not a government agent, O Haru," I insisted. "And unless, of course, it was Toyama that was instrumental in causing the boarding of the sub-chaser and capture of my friends, I have no reason for inimical intent against the mysterious agency. I have only a vast craving curiosity, believe me, O Haru!"

"But I am instructed. And I'm afraid, afraid, to tell!" She kept shaking her blue-black head. "It is a dreadful secret, Toyama, to be known only to the Yamato!"

CHAPTER XXXII

WHAT O HARU KNEW

WHAT could I say? Palpably I was not of the Yamato, the Japanese race. And I was sick of attempting to pretend that I was in cahoots with the Retired Scholar of the House with the Bell.

I made a clean breast of it all. I assured the child of my real and moving friendship for her; stated frankly that there was no love lost between the Koji and myself; and even admitted to a compelling desire I truthfully felt to aid to escape the snares of the crafty *bonze*.

The admissions proved, oddly enough, more potent than any cajolery or deceit. They worked indeed like a charm. The golden tint came back into her cheeks along with the fleeting indentures of tiny frail dimples. And she confessed that only deep fear of Suzunoya-no-Koji was stilling her tongue.

Perhaps, she added, if she explained certain details we might not prove so hard upon her poor deluded countrymen. She could see the armed bucks riding into the patch, two by two, and she judged, quite logically, that we were engaged upon a belligerent expedition against her folk.

I conceded the war-waging purpose of our crusade, but pointed out that in my own case it was directed not so much at the Japanese who had accompanied her from Hawaii as against the crew of the schooner who had captured my ship and its chest of gold, wounded at least one of my friends, and made prisoners of all.

I sought to show her that, even in the case of the Indians, they lusted vengeance almost solely on the Buddhist *bonze* who had played the fox with them through lip-lying and preposterous promises he never could nor meant to fulfill. I assured her, in the end, that the worst that could happen to her countrymen, if they proved anyway submissive to reason, would be to be stripped of what they did not rightfully own and be shipped back to Hawaii.

She nodded eagerly. Her countryfolk, she said would be glad to leave the parched haggard desert. But they were held here through fear of Suzunoya-no-Koji and his terrible instrument, Toyama. If we could only get rid of the Retired Scholar and his professional killers,

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scattered among her folk, we should find the Japanese only too happy to make the long traverse back to Honolulu.

Thus, favored almost to a desire, I was enabled to draw from her cherry lips a connected complete account of the whole mixed-up business. By this time, through the enforced disuse of English for the past two days, I had almost begun to think in Spanish. To hear her babble now those swift familiar lingual sounds was like sweet music in my ears.

THE Honorable Miss Spring, as her name literally signified, had come over from Japan to Hawaii with her parents as a child of four. The mother dying a short time later, she had been raised and educated at the charitable Palama Settlement of Honolulu until, turning fifteen several months prior, she had secured a position as maid in a wealthy *hapa-haole* family.

She had heard, naturally, much of California; Japanese, she was told, grew rich there; and accordingly like the most of her people she had been keenly desirous of entering that land, so alluring with promises of better fortune. But on account of the fact that neither she nor her parents had been born within the jurisdiction of the United States, she could never become a citizen of the Republic and leap, thereby, the bar of that Gentleman's Clause of the International Treaty which bound Japan and the United States. She could never hope, in other words, to reach the mainland.

ONE day, over a month gone, the topsail schooner, *Taisei Maru*, had tacked around Barber's Point and Quarantine Island and dropped her mudhooks in the roadstead of Honolulu off the foot of Fort Street. It was quickly circulated among the Japanese of the mid-Pacific metropolis that a certain number of yellow men and women, with their offspring, would be allowed to sail in the schooner to Lower California, across which a portage would be made to the mainland of Mexico.

They were all promised work at handsome wage in the army of Pancho Villa as sappers and cooks, fag-men to officers, and factotums of general utility. They were not to do any active fighting. But it was promised further that, should Francisco Villa finally win out and thus be enabled to put through his agrarian reforms, he would parcel land to every Japanese in his army—so many acres to each family.

Captain T. Yasuhara, the master of the schooner, was the one who started the rumors and recruited the party. He spoke vaguely of a certain high-caste Japanese, named Suzunoya-no-Koji, who had accompanied the schooner from Nippon. He even insinuated that perhaps the expedition, through the astuteness of this high-born, scholarly Japanese, might gain entrance to the promised land rather than revolution-torn Mexico—forsooth, run the Border into Alta California of the United States.

That topped the glittering offers, dazzled like gold the slant eyes of the Japanese. From Ewilei to Waikiki and from the Moana and Punahoe valleys behind the town, the yellow people flocked to the schooner. Girls, like O Haru San, joined, alone and unchaperoned, so eager were they to knock at the door of California. In the end, Captain Yasuhara was forced to blast the high hopes of many by turning troops of them away.

On the trip over, Suzunoya-no-Koji had displayed marked interest in the dainty Hawaiian-reared girl. He had presented her with the rich silk kimono of delicate rosy shades she was even then wearing. Partly because of the copious draughts of shiro-sake he drank during meals, but mostly come of the masculine instinct to strut before the female, which actuates Oriental almost as strongly as Occidental, he had sought to impress her with his importance by reciting much about himself.

He had been educated, he said, to be a Buddhist *bonze* at the famous Hermitage of the Nippon Kane, the great brass bell, in the Shijo Causeway of Kioto. But he had perceived that Japan was swinging, with Western civilization, away from the influence of the old religions and early had sought a more progressive line of endeavor. He had entered newspaper work. He had raised himself within a short period to the editorship of the *Shimbun Hozhi*, the *News-Intelligence* of Tokio, and become thereby a power in the land.

He it was who had started Toyama. It was during that wave of supreme confidence and prosperity, immediately succeeding the Russo-Japanese War, when Japan practically annexed Korea and the most of Manchuria as fields in which to encourage the migration and settlement of her overcrowded hordes.

Pan-Nipponism was on every tongue; the colonizing difficulties previously met in Formosa and Lower Manchuria were forgotten; and a staunch determination motivated all the people to brook no such outside interference with the peace terms as had been suffered at the hands of the Powers after the war with China.

SUZUNOYA-NO-KOJI gathered together a handful of the most influential merchants and the most imperialistic politicians of the country and told them his plan. It was to establish among themselves a militant organization which would foster and foment Pan-Nipponism, force measures of progress and external expansion from the Government, speed the people to emigrate, and protect merchants in the commercial exploitation

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of the lands that had been won at the point of the sword.

"We should advance and not recede," he told the gathering. "To stop where we are now is to retreat. Whether in politics, war or business, this holds true. While we push forward boldly, the opposition has no chance to form plans. We have a saying that the gods never curse successful men. A determined spirit, we also say, will crush a rock. These maxims are suitable to the present situation.

"We have met obstacles in promoting Formosa, the Pescadores and Lower Manchuria. Thoroughly examined, you will find such obstacles have not the power even of drops of water falling from the eaves. When we of the Yamato race rise with mighty resolve, such opposition will prove as futile as an attempt to sweep back the sea with a broom.

"What I purpose doing is organizing a great peasant soldiery, armed with the hoe instead of the sword, who will go forth into our new territories to till the unproductive soil, open mines, operate railroads, establish private enterprises and thus found a stupendous colonial empire for Japan.

"We few will direct the onward movement. You merchants will reap the harvest in the greater commerical activity and prosperity, in the opening of new markets for your wares, in the downing of all competition. You statesmen will gain the respect and confidence of the people by such evidences of forward-looking, and you will find in the masses a bulwark of strength.

"But the colonists must be aided and protected. We must brook no opposition from the subject peoples; we must close quietly the doors to free trade and ring ourselves round with a solid wall of embargoes. The Government must be urged to an official activity in material development; the Army and Navy must be upheld and enlarged; by our own sheer power we must force the passage of laws correcting abuses, granting aid, furnishing adequate military protection.

"To do this, implacable vengeance must be wreaked on any bureaucrats within the three thousand isles who seek to oppose or in any way obstruct our imperialistic policies. The anti-militarists, the trade-union demagogues, and the humble ones of the missionary party must go. In the countries of Manchuria, Formosa, Korea and Mongolia, the yoke must be tightened on the subject peoples and our own nationals materially encouraged and helped.

"We must build up, in other words, a ministry among ourselves that will be supreme and all-powerful for Pan-Nipponism. I tell you, gentlemen, in the great surge of world tendency, there is no influence that can stop the forward movement of our Yamato race. All we have to do is to unite our different strengths, stand firm for retention of our conquests, insist on protection, equality and justice for our own peoples and industries, and move onward energetically in the various quarters of the globe."

It was necessary of course that the association should have a name and, according to all Oriental precedents, a symbol. It was suggested that the symbol should be the first sign of the ancient Chinese zodiac, prevalent in Japan; the Rat of the twelve cyclical animals of the yellow road of the sun, which signified water and hence could be readily defined to mean expansion over the water, or Pan-Nipponism.

But the trouble was that the symbol and its derivation were too apparent, too lacking in mystery, too susceptive of interpretation. The junta was aware that they could suffer neither themselves nor their offensive purposes to become known even to their own Government who would have called a halt, no doubt, to such blunt, bludgeoning, Teutonic tactics. To make the symbol cryptic and yet retain the meaning of expansion over the water, the sign of the white mouse was substituted.

The very name, Toyama, was cabalistic. In Japanese, Toyama merely means Big Mountain. But Suzunoya-no-Koji pointed out to the confraternity how he had derived the title without thinking of that particular word, and had been surprized and highly gratified to find that his little syllabic-puzzle so aptly agreed with the evident descriptive appellation.

He had transposed the final syllable of the Japanese name for their own race, Ya-ma-to, into the first syllable of this new title, and the result had been, To-ya-ma. Therefore, by inversion, Toyama really stood for Yamato, or the Japanese people.

Come of all this secrecy, of dark purposes concealed even from the eyes of their own nationals and Government, whom they meant ultimately to aid, it was an easy step and quite the natural one for the Oriental character, to introduce terrorism. Gangmen, highbinders and other professional killers were hired, and shipped hither and yon, inside the three thousand isles of Japan and out—wherever the freemasonry of Toyama judged there was a need.

Toyama became on one hand a bountiful and progressive society, bestowing largess and promoting prosperity among its fellowship. Through its power the Government was impelled to enact laws improving the conditions of farmers, colonists and laborers, subsidizing industries, protecting the emigrants, and throwing open vast new lands.

Irrigation was facilitated, rivers conserved, inundations forestalled and thus immense unproductive areas utilized. Machinery was

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perfected and at the direction of Toyama transported everywhere. Capital was furnished for migration and homesteading, to establish colonial banks and systems of credits, and to endow and operate experimental stations from which was disseminated such newly acquired knowledge as the value of artificial fertilizers, cures for diseases of stock, preventives of insect pests and other cognate matters.

On the other hand, Toyama was a ministry supreme for terror; a spy system all-seeing and omnipresent as was once the notorious "Third Section" of the Russian Imperial Police; a sect of fanatics given to a ruthless policy of killing like nothing so much as the ancient Assassins of Persia.

There were lesser chiefs, of course, under Suzunoya-no-Koji, grand priors initiated into all the sinister energies and ramifications of the Holy Clique. They were mostly the heads of industrial monopolies who, with great power, were virtual rulers of Japanese provinces, islands and various subject countries.

The main body was composed of merchants, farmers and coolies, known as associates or fellows, who were fostered by the cruel exterminating policies of the association and were in process of induction into its secrets and prosperity.

At the foot of the ladder were the spies and assassins who, though hirelings, stood in greater fear of Suzunoya-no-Koji than ever they did of the different native states and constabularies, whose laws they continually outraged and whose vigilance they forever eluded.

They were all young men, bound by blood-money and irrevocable oaths, from whose ranks were selected the agents for any sanguinary deed.

They dreaded the very power reared up by their own series of fiendish murders; that terrible structure, Toyama, of which they were the foundation and the footstool, but which crushed them with acute fear into implicit, blind and slavish obedience. These were called the Devoted Ones.

High and low, all yielded an unquestioning feudal loyalty to Suzunoya-no-Koji, who became a *shogun* more powerful than the emperor, an Apollyon more fearsome than the Old Man of the Mountain. He was more commonly called Nidzoumi San, or The Mouse-Man, because of the white mice he carried always in his hat.

It was rumored of these white mice that they could scent down a man and, with one nip of their chisel-like incisors, instill into his system a poison that would cause swift, painful and mortifying death. It was even said that if ever a Devoted One turned traitor, it was Nidzoumi San who killed him in this grisly manner with his poisonous white mice.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TAPESTRIES OF GOLD

SUZUNOYA-NO-KOJI had chuckled through his twin tufts of mustaches when the girl, O Haru San, had asked him was the party really going to Mexico to serve in Villa's army or on the other hand, as had been artfully hinted and which she ardently hoped, to that El Dorado of California.

To such a dread powerful personage as the Mouse-Man, she deemed, now, nothing hard or impossible. She could see no reason why the yellow autocrat should journey personally in so crowded and lumbering a craft as the schooner, if it were not to force by his tremendous power, entrance for the whole expedition into the United States.

It was all right, the Retired Scholar replied, for such sort as the coolies to believe that they were headed for chaotic Mexico. He did not care just then to divulge his dark purpose, even to her; but she might be sure they were not going to meet up with Villa nor yet seek to pry admittance into the mainland of the United States.

They were going to a California that was better than the land of gold about which she had heard and dreamed so much. It was Lower California where the gold was spun in heavy tapestries from the very trees.

This sorely puzzled the girl. She had suffered Nidzoumi San's attentions, not only because she could not very well do otherwise, but in the main because of a great childish curiosity. She wanted to learn who he was and, more, precisely what was the nature of the venture upon which, with so much of youthful hope and ardor, she had embarked.

She perceived that he had explained only enough to impress her with his profound power. Subtly and completely he had accomplished his fell purpose. As he breathed more and more about that pernicious influence, Toyama, her fear of him grew apace. Dread crept into her little wondering soul and cowering submission.

What gossip might slip her frightened tongue would only add, he knew, to the coolies' awe of him, intrench with terror his position, and make for groveling obedience to his plan, whenever he saw fit to disclose that plan and show the people just why they had been deluded and fetched here to Magdelana.

There was no such possibility as mutiny. O Haru San knew her folk. Albeit the Japanese were actuated by a spirit of adventure, it was only because of the glittering inducements offered and there was strong within them, besides, that other national characteristic of discipline.

For eight centuries, their fathers and their fathers' fathers had been thralls to a rigorous

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military feudalism; they were, as a result, dumb driven beasts to the voice of command. Whatever authoritatively they were bidden to do, that blindly would they do.

Added to this was the potent occult spell of Toyama. O Haru San felt certain that the master of the schooner, Captain T. Yasuhara, was still another nabob of the omnipotent oligarchy and that his mushroom hatted, almost naked, moneky crew were, one and all, picked men from the ranks of the Devoted Ones. A number of them, she noticed had tatooed in their chests the sign of the mouse. She feared that there were other highbinders of the tong mixed in with her own poor folk, overhearing their plans and whispered hopes, and reporting all daily to the yellow czar.

She began to wish she never had accepted, from the despot, that present of the rosy gown. She longed for some subterfuge whereby, with politeness and diplomacy, she might return it to him and rid herself for the future of his attentions. She hid from him, in the bowels of the ship, as often and for as protracted periods as she possibly could, without altogether evincing her gnawing dread. She feared to arouse his suspicions lest she incur his awful wrath.

The day before Punta Entrada at the entrance to Magdalena Bay was raised, the skipper of the schooner announced that there was only sufficient water remaining to last the rest of the journey. The coolies could not afford to waste any more of the water, he admonished, by brewing it with rice into that poor turbid quality of liquor known as nigori-sake.

But watching Suzunoya-no-Koji with the tail of her eyes, as he came out on deck that noon wearing his tall Korean hat, the girl could tell that the shortage of water had not interfered, of a certainty, with the plutocrat's enjoyment of his luncheon. The double folds of flesh in the inner corners of his eyes were pendulously heavy as a snake's and the eyeballs were glazed from the effects of his overindulgence in fine white sake, a goodly supply of which had been taken aboard for his especial use at Honolulu.

He gathered the people around him with the aid of the monkey crew and a certain number of men among her own folk, whose swift activity was plainly noticeable. Then, amid a solemn hush, he removed the tall hat and showed, perched and nested in his hair, four white mice.

IT WAS the first time the mice had been exposed to their slant eyes but instantly the Japanese knew. Through those devious, tortuous channels by which news travels among Orientals, all had learned what those white mice symbolized.

"Toyama!" the whisper swept through them; then aghast—"Nidzoumi San!"

The tall figure in the blue robe, eyes sparkling glassily, waited for the terrific intelligence to strike home.

"Behold, coolies!" he thereupon announced. "From now on, you and your efforts are under the protection and the all-seeing eye of Toyama."

That night, forward on the forecastle deck, over feeble braziers and seething pots of rice and bean soup, many a prayer went up to Kwannon, Goddess of Mercy, and many a soft dough cake was tenderly patted and molded between trembling yellow hands, to be placed later and in pyramids about the black, ugly little effigies of Buddha, below in the steerage.

The women anointed not their hair with camellia-oil that evening, but saved the perfumed essence to pour into tiny bowls before fat good old Buddh, set in the angle of the beam-arms or sitting cross-legged on the portsills, and watching patiently over the destinies of his chosen ones.

And a little red flame flickered the whole night through, well forward in the eyes of the ship, to guide the bland orbs of Buddh through the breathing dark and exorcise the dread evil that hung over his restless sleepers and those that could not sleep.

Early next morning, the bread-loaf shape of Santa Margarita Island and the rugged outline of the northern headlands about Magdalena lifted above the horizon and in the flame of the sunset they made passage through the narrows and sighted in the bay, the little subchaser anchored in the lee of the white spit of sand.

The trim lines and somber coat of the subchaser, added to that striped silken ensign pendant from the flagstaff, impressed them with the certainty that here was an American vessel of war. Immediately they vaulted to the conclusion that they really were being landed in the territory of the United States and were about to be engaged, by Toyama, in an attack upon that government ship.

It was these fears which gave to Suzunoya-no-Koji the theme of the story he was later to relate to me when, that very night, I met him among the ghostly dunes. At that time, he said, if you remember, that the Japanese thought they truly had disembarked upon the territory of the United States and were afraid lest we of the government ship should shoo them back into the schooner on account of their evident transgression of the immigration laws.

Gladly they had trekked across the sand into the paling East and had stopped, only to a resurgence of their fears, when the Mouse-Man brought them to a halt in order to pick two of the party to remain behind as guards.

O Haru San recognized the chosen two as having been among those active, that previous day, in herding the yellow people to hear the

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announcement of the Retired Scholar. She sensed that these were two of the Devoted Ones among her own folk.

Their instructions were to see that no one left the government ship, as the Koji intentionally called the little craft. He knew that it was not a government ship of course; but he was scheming to add to the fears of the coolies and thus cover up the real purpose for the guards in the sand. Should any one leave the government ship, well, he added significantly, the guards were not to suffer them to trail the party.

On went the expedition, then, in the wake of Suzunoya-no-Koji, who plodded stoically ahead, his hands crossed before him in the blue sleeves and his eyes swinging neither to the right nor to the left. He led them directly to the deep wide trough among the dunes, where water gushed thickly from a brown rock and there was tall straggling brush hedging the sandy walls ten feet up. Removing his slender yellow hands from the sleeves, he indicated that here they should camp and build a fire of the greasewood knots.

O HARU SAN had searched about, during the desert journeying, for sign of those tapestries which she credulously believed would web the trees with films of spun gold. All she had been able to discover were malformed cacti and blanched shrubs, bearded with gray tufts of moss. Here in the sandy trough the same lichen was draping the greasewood.

That evening, to the clustered dumb Japanese about the crackling fire, Suzunoya-no-Koji divulged something of the true shape of affairs. They were to remain here and build, in the spacious trough, a *toyo-mura*, a permanent village of the Orient. They should have to content themselves as they were for the night.

The following day the government ship would steam away and, doubly sure then of their secrecy, they would fetch from the hold of the schooner, the frames of houses and *toyo*-bridges, the lanterns, *hibachi* or braziers, lattices and tiling he had freighted for this specific purpose from Japan.

Of course, if the government ship persisted in remaining longer than the allotted day, in an effort to penetrate their cloak of mystery, Toyama would see to it that she swiftly upanchored and sped away. Toyama, he remarked meaningly, would brook no interference with its plans.

The work he purposed they should do, he said, was comparatively easy and should prove lucrative with good wages, better wages even than that supposed to have been offered by the bandit, Villa. They each would be parceled a twenty-five-acre section of desert, besides, to irrigate and force therein the growing of garden truck and other products waiting the fine intensive farming of the Japanese. Toyama would facilitate such endeavors by importing, as time wore on, farm implements of the most improved type.

They need not fear the few Indians in the vicinity, he heartened them. These Indians paid allegiance to the sun-flag of Japan as staunchly and with even more reverence than did they. Later the Guiacuras would join hands with the Yamato and together they would found here a great industrial colony of Nippon. The wonderful expansive landlocked harbor of Magdalena would yet be filled, he vowed, with all manner of ships flying the blazing banner of the East.

Why he had not told them these plans in Honolulu, he explained, was through hesitation lest they divulge some inkling, however unintentionally, to the Americans. Had the Americans got even so much as a hint of the real purpose of the expedition, they would have somehow put a stop to it, stepped in themselves, and promoted the grand venture for their own interest and kin.

"I promise you also," he ended, "that five families, no matter how large, shall be aided each year in running the Border into the United States. That means, to be sure, that with the help of Toyama, they shall win through successfully and be kept forever immune from danger of deportation.

"There is a proviso of course attached to the promise. But it merely is that these families must be the ones to establish, for the year, the five best records in gathering the orchilla lichen. That is the sole and entire reason why you all are here. To found and operate an orchilla-collecting station, a supply depot, that will furnish the world with the vegetable basis for dyeing wool, cotton and silk stuffs."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DRUNKEN MICE

IN MUTE silence the coolies heard him out, the silence of deadened hope in a dead land. At his word, like sheep they got afoot. Leading them thereupon like some strange bell-wether, the yellow potentate went up the trough, a flaming cresset of greasewood in one hand, the other pointing out to them the gray tufts of orchilla lichen dripping in heavy beards from the brush.

He held steady his free arm, clicked his teeth several times, and the white mice, as in answer, lifted up his tall hat the merest fraction, squirmed out under the rim, and ran down the blue sleeve. Natural vegetarians, the rodents nibbled greedily at the moss tufts, sitting up on their haunches, long bald tails out-waving,

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showing every evidence of enjoying the odd fodder.

He explained, chuckling at the coolies' fearful astonishment, that the mice of Toyama were to enact a new rôle and serve, strangely enough, as his test-tubes. Through certain indications and symptoms they would surely show, he hoped to be able to grade the moss and determine finally whether the fungus growing on the shrubs was more strongly impregnated with coloring matter than that hanging from the arboreous cacti.

O Haru San did not believe the pseudo-scientific explanation. She felt that, beneath this openly displayed feeding of the sleek white mice, something lurked concealed and perversely wrong. There was a hidden drama afoot.

Suzunoya-no-Koji returned the mice to his hat and approached her. Unable covertly to elude him, she babbled, like an eager child, a rush of questions.

He showed evident pride as he bared to her the subtlety and elaborateness of his deep-laid towering plans. Not for no small purpose had the head of dread Toyama journeyed all this way in the smelly lumbering schooner and indulged in so much petty intrigue with these poor ignorant coolies.

Orchilla, he pointed out, was an invaluable dye property. It was the vegetable basis from which was produced, through chemical treatment, several coloring compounds; cudbear, a violet-red dye; litmus, a blue dye; and lime lake, or French purple. In all the world there were only three or four places from whence could be obtained this particularly potent species of orchilla, called Roccella tinctoria. It was to be found in the Department of Lima, Peru, up and down the Malabar Coast of India, on the rocks of the Cape Verde Islands, and in the jungles of Angola, Portuguese West Africa, where the most durable coloring matter thus far had been gathered.

Suzunoya-no-Koji had heard of an American syndicate that once, unsuccessfully, had pursued the collecting of orchilla from the stems and branches of the arborescent flora along the Magdalena coast. He himself, with Captain T. Yasuhara and one other grand prior of Toyama, had ventured into the desert, seven months before to investigate the report.

They found the report lacking in verity, the true facts understated, the prolific extent and value of dyer's moss altogether underestimated. Apparently there was no reason for the failure of the Americans, save only the withering heat and scarcity of water.

Of orchilla, there was a fecund abundance and the lichen proved by later experiment to be productive of more brilliant and permanent coloring properties than those possessed by samples from the best "weed" of Angola. Magdalena Desert was an unexploited El Dorado of Spanish Moss.

It was during this investigation, half a year gone, the Koji said, that Captain Yasuhara, the other grand prior named Bakemono San and he had been captured by the Indians of the sierras. Fortunately they had discovered, through exposing the solar ensign of Nippon, that the Guiacuras were sunworshippers and maintained temples or *teocalli*, which were sculptured with the twelve cyclical animals of the yellow road of the sun.

Excepting for three or four analogous substitutions, the carved zodiacs were identical duplicates of that ancient Chinese system from which the symbol of Toyama itself had been derived.

They had made capital of the similarity and they purposed now to pursue the advantage gained. Indeed, it had been the intention of Suzunoya-no-Koji and Captain Yasuhara to leave the schooner the moment she hove to and proceed, as self-delegated ambassadors of good will, across the desert to the box cañon of these Indians.

They planned to encourage the friendship of the Guiacuras, foment their superstitious awe, in order later to be able to use them, at a pittance, as orchilla gatherers and virtual peons.

The presence of the sub-chaser in the bight of bay had caused a temporary postponement of the amicable overtures. They could not desert their ship and expedition lest we might mingle, gossip and gather from the coolies something of the real reason for their being there.

And if they could not make the mission themselves, it certainly could not be trusted to the hands of any of the crew or party; not alone because it demanded the utmost delicacy and tact, but for fear also that we might track the emissaries across the sand and gain in this way some knowledge of the extent of their plans. For months to come, the Koji said, they should have to be watchful of Americans.

It was not alone this government ship in the bight of bay, he added. Later would heave in sight the stupendous American men-o'-war to engage, amid the desolation of Magdalena Bay, in target practice. They had expected the war vessels to be in the bay when they arrived, and it was for that very reason the expedition had been gaged to so limited a number and been further camouflaged by being freighted in the unwieldy schooner.

The men-o'-war would be sure to come sooner or later. Therefore, they could not build their Oriental village, exposed and in the open, on the immediate shores of the bay. They must seclude it within the solitude of the desert, hidden from the prying eyes of the Americans in the depths of the wide trough.

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BAKEMONO SAN, the grand prior who had accompanied Captain Yasuhara and himself on the investigation of seven months previous, was even then up north in the capital of Enseñada de Todos Santos, negotiating with Estaban Cantu, Governor of Lower California, for the exclusive license to gather and export the orchilla lichen from the territory.

My Lord, the Ghost, as his name signified, was to proceed then to Honolulu, of which place he was a resident and large property-holder and where as soon as possible he was to establish the dye-factory.

Of course, the Retired Scholar would have preferred conducting the dye-works in Japan. Labor was cheaper in Japan than even in Hawaii; the new industry would bring work and added prosperity to his country; and there, through the pervading force of Toyama, the delicate processes, they proposed using in producing their dyes, could be more readily kept secret than anywhere else in the world.

It was concomitant with success, however, absolutely necessary and indeed almost compulsory that they should operate their dye-plant in American territory. There was the crux of the whole business, the reason for their fear of the Americans, the cause of all the secrecy.

Even before engaging in the European War, he explained, the United States had sharply and abruptly awakened to the realization that most of her dyes, the component bases and intermediates, had been gathered, compounded, patented and imported from Germany. With the Allied blockade of the Central Powers, there was a swift dearth of dyestuffs in a country that normally uses thousands of tons monthly.

Slowly, under the pressure of need, substitutes had come upon the American market. But they were only fugitive stains, lacking wholly the brilliant and retentive coloring qualities of the formerly imported dyes.

What was sorely needed were good sound vegetable and coal-tar extracts which by chemical processes could be developed into durable dyes, substantial, bright and capable of exposure and wear. Ultimately, of course, the Americans had achieved to a degree the manufacture for themselves of permanent fast dyes.

But with the war over, the blockade lifted and thousands of tons of dye-constituents on hand in bottoms and warehouses, Germany was eager to regain control of the greatest consuming market of dye-stuffs in the world and was aided fortuitously, in her project, by the depreciated value of her coinage standard.

America, however, had awakened rudely to her sad dependence for such material on the outside world. She proposed never again to subject her vast textile industry and millions of consumers to such embarrassment and deprivation as had been suffered when, peremptorily, the war cut off the source of supply.

The United States was actuated by another and paramount motive. Dyestuffs were not only precious in time of peace; in stress of war they were indispensable. From the same raw materials, which produced dyes, could be manufactured high explosives. An established dye industry, therefore, was a reserve, formidable and of incalculable value in event of war.

Consequently, to build up such a reserve and inhibit America from serving longer as the dumping-ground of foreign dyes, the Congress of the United States was engaged, even as the Koji talked, in enacting legislative barriers precluding wholesale importation, penalizing manufacturers and clothiers who persisted in using quantities of imported coloring components, and encouraging with protective laws the infant industry and home-made products.

It was to take advantage of these tariffs and promoting laws and, at the same time, fill the crying need of the largest consumers of dyestuffs on the globe, that the power of Toyama had been invoked to gain a monopoly of orchilla-gathering in Lower California and to establish an immense dye-factory in Hawaii.

The legislative weapons that would have militated against the Japanese selling their wares in the greatest market of the world, would become by the operating of their plant in American territory, instruments to foster prosperity and prevent competition.

An elaborate, acute and utterly unprincipled scheme, it circumvented and took strategic advantage of the very laws decreed for the express purpose of prohibiting such baneful outside influence. But Suzunoya-no-Koji was bothered by no tender scruples.

His people were natural artists he maintained; always had they excelled in the delicate crafts, in wood and ivory carving, metal inlaying, the glyptic arts, weaving and embroidering. The same subtle talents they would bring to the making of fine durable dyes that would outstrip and hopelessly undersell the American home-made products.

It was indeed a tremendous project. Once the monopoly on orchilla-collecting was guaranteed by Governor Cantu, Captain Yasuhara would launch the Toyo Maru, a new line of Oriental ships, to ply between the dye-works in Honolulu, the supply station of Magdalena Bay, and the selling agency in San Francisco.

Japanese coolies would be introduced by the thousands into Lower California; the Indians of the vicinity drawn into the more menial work; and a great industrial colony of Nippon would here flourish upon the Western shores.

They would incorporate the whole ramifying business under the fostering laws of the United

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States, in the name of Bakemono San and of other merchant associates of Toyama in Hawaii and California. Then would they no longer need to hide from the Americans. The very legislative barriers they so dreaded now would be converted into parental benevolent protection.

"My work will be done then, O Haru San," the Scholar concluded. "I am immensely rich, educated, powerful. It will be a sinecure for such as I to obtain letters and passports entitling me to admission and residence in this California.

"If you, O Neko San, should prefer to live there, rather than in Hawaii or our own Japan, then there shall we dwell in a dainty *toyo-kan* of our own, where the white cranes in the garden will make sacred our happiness, and contentment will reign as quiet and endless as the lives of the honorable tortoises in the purling brooks."

But he was an *okina*, an aged one in her young eyes; he had lived the ascetic life of a *dojin;* and she feared, most of all, the depths of power given him by the mysterious agency, Toyama, of which he was the avowed head. To turn aside his evident purpose and thus postpone for a little, the tragedy of being constrained to promise to marry him, she had fallen to singing and tinkling for him the *samisen.*

IT HAD been with relief that she had welcomed the interruption caused by one of the guards jumping precipitantly down into the trough out of the night. The fellow was the one who had been picked by the Koji as the second and inner guard in the sand.

His fat, high cheek-boned, face was a jaundice yellow with fright; the mouth that naturally was never closed because of malformed protruding teeth, was spread wider than ever with his heavy labored panting; and he seemed all in all, intensely excited.

One of the crew of the government ship had escaped ashore, he said; was even then crossing the dunes; had doubtless killed the first Devoted One, and surely would have slain him had he not fled incontinently over the sand.

Suzunoya-no-Koji got afoot, his sleek face apoplectic with swift surging blood, the skin green-yellow as citron. The double-folded eyes glittered hot with menace, like the barrels of a gun. He was terribly angry at the Devoted One over his dereliction of duty, his abject failure to stop my honorable self from crossing the desert. But all the Koji said to the fellow was—

"Come with me."

They had gone out into the night and never again had O Haru seen the man.

But in her mental eye, after they had left, rose up once more the aspect of the Devoted One, his high cheek-boned face a jaundice yellow, the oblique eyes deadened as by a blow. She saw him vibrating again under the simple words of the Retired Scholar, leaping back from the swish of the blue mouse-decorated robe, following behind, stumbling, head bowed, shivering in the warm night.

Some abysmal fear, she knew, was chilling the Devoted One. She thought, all on a sudden, of the hidden drama she had sensed earlier that evening, beneath the obvious feeding of the white mice.

Now she had hoped all through the long journey from Honolulu, that she might at last find some ruse whereby she could frustrate and wholly escape marriage with the Koji.

But this ominous event added forcibly to the happenings of the day to show her plainly that she was impotent, powerless, helpless to aid herself, let alone stem the tide of the Koji's will. The very rashness of the yellow czar's disclosures about himself and his schemes evidenced how certain he was of her. She was as good as married to him.

She collapsed over the *samisen*, thereat, and eased the little heart of her with great rending sobs. It was while she was thus slumped, if you remember, that I observed her from the bald-headed mound of sand.

That morning at daybreak, altogether alone, Suzunoya-no-Koji had reappeared in the camp. He reported as an evidence of the might of Toyama, that the government ship had been boarded by the Devoted Ones of the schooner and all the Americans, even the *kogane*-striped captain, taken prisoner. The gold-barred captain had been wounded but through the mercy of Toyama he would be suffered to live.

The Retired Scholar selected the more robust of the men to accompany him to the beach and the berth of the schooner. They were to lift out of the schooner's hold and carry back to the trough the house-frames of the *toyo-mura* they were to build in the sand.

The women, children and remainder of the men were instructed to stay where they were, piece together the segments, as they arrived, and stand the frames, according to their design, in the sandy hollow.

The yellow autocrat made hissing sounds with his teeth, as he spoke, apparently to show urbanity. Well, as if commanded, one and then another of the mice lifted up his tall hat the merest fraction, bellied out under the rim, and took to running up and down his sleeves, their claws catching in the blue stuff and clicking audibly, their movements swift and oddly unstable and erratic, as if they were drunk with sake and engaged in ridding themselves of its heady fumes in this grotesque and wabbly game of tag.

O Haru, as she shivered, noticed, on a sudden, that their sleek white fur was all blotched with red swollen spots. Instantly her thoughts

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harked back to the mysterious feeding of the night prior—the absolute disappearance of the Second Devoted One. Her mind became obsessed by the notion that the lichen, which the mice had eaten, had distilled in their system that subtle, potent and evidently intoxicating poison of which they were rumored to be the carriers.

She knew then for a surety. The Second Devoted One, he of the buck teeth, had been led out into the night by Suzunoya-no-Koji and there, among the ghostly dunes, bitten to swift, painful, mortifying death by the poisonous mice.

She could hardly restrain herself to wait until the blue-robed grisly figure started back toward the schooner at the head of the plodding men. Then insane with terror she fled, driven by the hallucination that those splotched mice were immediately behind her, scampering up and down the dunes, hounding her like tiny beasties amuck, staggering about her sandaled feet, clicking up her kimono to kill her off at last, with one quick sharp nip of their poison-secreting teeth.

CHAPTER XXXV

LETHAL PRINTS

"WHAT does the tiny one say?" queried Mariquita in Spanish. "Does she know these white traitors with the Japanese, this man and woman whom you believe to be Señor Morley and his wife?"

I turned to the Japanese maid, seated, a rosy silken bundle among the plants, and repeated the question in English. Her answer was a shake of the head so emphatic with negation as to tremble the pale yucca bells in the high chignon of hair. She had left the encampment so early, she replied, that she knew naught of any white persons joining out with her folk.

Indeed, she added lispingly, it was a surprize to her. But come to think of it, she did recall now, that the Retired Scholar had said something that dawning, about having fortunately secured a white man to act as sales-agent of the dyestuffs to operate in American territory out of San Francisco. The sales-agent was none other, I was sure, than that chubby-faced traitor, Kit Morley.

I asked O Haru San about Jim Hathaway, our skipper. I was anxious to know whether Jim was pulling through all right from the effects of the knife wound he had received, the night prior, in the boarding operations. She believed he was recovering, she answered, because of that remark of the Koji who had said through the mercy of Toyama, the *kogane*-striped captain was to be allowed to live.

Long shadows were stealing out from the sheathed boles of the Joshua-trees by now, and I observed that Metztli, vexed by his inability to make out what we were saying in the unknown tongue, had taken to pacing nervously about. He acted as if he feared time were being wasted to small purpose, showing evident desire to be riding on.

"Let us canter ahead to the mesquite flat where we are to meet the scouts," I therefore suggested to the high priest. "I can relate on the ride all the girl told me."

"But what shall we do with the little one?" asked Mariquita solicitously.

"Better take her along," was my idea. "If we succeed in bundling all these Japanese back into their schooner, she will doubtless want to accompany them. Haven't we an extra horse upon which she could ride?"

Metztli shook his mud curls. Looking over the long column trailing out upon the sandy flat, I could see the bucks, Mausers slung across their backs, dismounting and standing patiently, each beside the head of his animal. Only by a couple of them doubling up could we obtain a mount for the girl.

"Let us leave her here under charge of Acolhua, the scout who rescued her," suggested Mariquita. "When she regains a bit more of her strength, Acolhua can guide her to the mesquite flat, there to await the fortunes and final disposition of our crusade."

It was a good plan, freeing us of the encumbrance of a non-combatant. It had struck me anyway that perhaps like most Oriental women, O Haru San did not know how to ride and would have proved fearful of getting astride a horse. Certainly if she accompanied us her little heart would throb the faster as we drew near her poor deceived folk and the belligerent purpose of our expedition sank more poignantly in upon her.

"In the cool of the evening, O Haru," I told her, "Acolhua, the scout here, will lead you across the sand to rejoin us."

"*Sayonara, O San,*" she dimpled, trusting us like the child she was.

We left her then and rode out of the Joshua grove. Ahead and overhead the coppery burnish of the sky had deepened into a fan of ragged red feathers. The sun, filling the obtuse angle of the fan, was also flushed a feverish hue. A broad, teeming ball of arterial red, it swung so low in the sky that its lower limb seemed to be dancing atop the nearest ridge of dunes.

We rode into its fervor, Metztli and Mariquita on either hand of me. I repeated what the Honorable Miss Spring had said about Toyama and the purpose here of the Japanese. When I mentioned how Suzunoya-no-Koji had planned to make virtual peons of the Guiacuras, Metztli alongside me ejaculated a mouth-filling oath, then sharply dug his heels into the bay cob and spurted ahead, as if unable, with indignant anger, to contain himself to hear more.

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"Dios piedad!" exclaimed Mariquita, looking after him. "God pity that saffron priest of the Japanese, if ever Metztli gets to grapples with him!"

"But about those drunken mice with their red spots, Mariquita?" I asked. "What do you make of that?"

It was not altogether unaccountable, she returned. Indeed, the red mottlings on the mice recalled vividly to her mind the story she once had heard of how her grandfather had first discovered the orchilla lianas in the forested uplands of the Hacienda del Cazadero. Her people had operated, as I remembered, a dye-works on a small scale in the Mexican pueblo of Guadalupe y Calvo, where coloring matter was furnished for the tinting of *serapes*, *camisas* and *mantillas*.

Her grandfather, old Wenceslas Jirasek, had noticed one shearing time, red swellings blotching the suddenly revealed hides of the clipped sheep. Learning from the herders that the sheep appeared to relish the long gray creepers, spun between the trees of the tablelands, he had caused a chemical analysis to be made of the lianas.

It was determined by this analysis that the lichen was of that feebler species of orchilla called Roccella umbilicaria and that it contained, like all the archil tribe, erythric and lecanoric acids. It was these indigestible acids, lying sour and heavy in the natural crucibles of the sheep's stomachs, which had been fermented, by organic chemical agitation, into this outcropping inflammation of the skin.

The same morbid red symptoms were showing on the white mice. Mariquita surmised, as a swift result of their meal on that far more potent species of California orchilla known as Roccella tinctoria. The souring of the acids in their stomachs had weakened the rodents probably, into this appearance of wabbly legs, and distressed them to the frenzy of the uncanny game of tag.

Whether the acids generated a poisonous effect, she did not know. She could recall however no case where, from eating the lichen, the sheep of the *hacienda* had died or caused the death of other creatures. But of course she ended enigmatically, they had partaken only of a feebler species of orchilla.

THE hectic ball of sun had sunk by perceptible degrees amid our lengthy explanations and surmises, until now only a red slice of upper limb floated ahead above the topmost ridge of dunes. The light of the world was fading in glorious death. On a sudden, as if shoved, the crimson slice dropped down out of view, and only its afterglow vaguely reddened the sky and suffused the land with shadowy luster.

In the half-light dropping down the higher ridge of sand I made out below, a loamy flat of desert, several miles in compass and dotted thickly with tall dim mesquite. This was the rendezvous, the mesquite flat evidently, and it surprized me not a little that none of the scouts should run out to greet us. We made under the fresco of fuzzy leafage, elongated pods and barbs of thorns without disturbing aught but a whirring bevy of dun-colored quail. The stillness was unexpected, heavy and portentous.

We came upon a wide cleared section that showed trampled evidences of having served as a corral. Off in the shadows to one side were a score of white ghostly figures, the clay-coated scouts, their hoods dangling down their backs, themselves oddly silent and closely grouped about some object upon the ground.

Following Metztli's lead we elbowed, Mariquita and I, through the mute clustered men. In the center of the gathering. Quetzal, my former guard, was lying flat on his back upon the ground, his eyes closed under bushy brows and about his rigid clay-coated body the intangible betrayals of death. I noticed in the walnut-brown instep of one bare foot, a flaming spot, virulently red as if poisoned.

Ichcapilli, the other scout-leader, straightened from bending over the supine form and drew Metztli, the girl and myself to one side. Quetzal, he said, had no more arrived with his squad of scouts than he had been killed. It was the swift result of a bite from one of those white mice of the saffron priest, a mouse with red eyes and red spots all over its whiteness.

Quetzal had met up with Ichcapilli here in the mesquite grove an hour past, and had gone on with him to get a view of the strange village the Japanese were erecting in the wide trough of the dunes. They had squirmed together up the slant of an adjacent mound, until they could look over its bald head and down into the tiny paper-walled houses.

They had watched, for a spell, the to-do of women and children below, and the string of burden-bearers shuffling like an army of ants back and forth over the sand, their colorful kimonos flapping about glossy legs, their backs bent beneath crates and frames. Then, tiring, they had looked about and observed, all at once, two immense black condors wheeling funereally over the low clump of mesquite and creosote bushes down in the trough to one side.

It was there the previous night that Quetzal had slain my Japanese captor with one throw of his obsidian knife. Ichcapilli recalled the tragic incident and remarked that the vultures probably had sighted, in the broken undergrowth, the motionless wavy-striped figure of the Japanese.

Quetzal agreed with him, but added that it was strange the great foul birds did not alight. The man below had been dead for hours and

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so far as he could see there was nothing moving in the clump, not even a breath of wind, to thus keep the condors hovering close but palpably fearful.

It was Ichcapilli's idea that the vultures were fed up with carrion and would soon sail away. But though they studied them for minutes longer, the sepulchral birds continued to wheel overhead in slow heavy circles, without flutter of wing, their flat predatory bald heads poised and watching, their whole aspect evil, broodingly persistent, patient as death.

It was all so intriguing, so mysteriously abnormal that they went down into the creosote clump to investigate. They came upon the striped-kimonoed form of my Japanese captor of the night prior. He was plainly dead and miraculously untouched by cruel tearing beaks.

That startled them for a certainty and caused a persistence of their search. Penetrating farther into the clump, they discerned ahead on a sudden, another Japanese, flat on his face upon the ground and to all appearances also dead. But they were wary of immediately approaching him, fearing some ruse. They noticed his mushroom hat lying off to one side, as if it had been shot there by the abruptness of his fall.

Quetzal, with his characteristic boldness, had finally taken the lead. Leaping forward upon the prone figure, grasping both shoulders, he had swung the man over upon his back and exposed the high cheek-boned face, the mouth spread by malformed protruding teeth, and the eyes open and glazed in death. It was the Second Devoted One, I recognized from O Haru's description, who failing to stop me the night before, had accompanied Suzunoya-no-Koji out into the sand and never again returned.

Ichcapilli said he only got a glimpse of the light yellow face. There was a movement among the folds of the dead man's kimono, then a flash of whiteness. It was a darting mouse, inflamed of eye and spotted with morbid red all over the white coat. It was the creeping movements of the rodent about the dead body that had frightened the vultures into their fear-filled hovering.

Ichcapilli leaped back, quivering with instinctive abhorrence. He saw Quetzal jump with bare feet full upon the rat, trampling it underfoot in frenetic fury. There was a tiny squeak; the sloping head squashed like the head of a snake; and then hard on the back of it, Quetzal made an odd gasping sound, partly of surprize but more with grisly horror. He threw up his clay-coated arms and forward on his face, even as the Japanese had apparently done before him, he fell like a stone, dead ere ever he struck the ground.

The mouse, as it squeaked in death, had bitten him. The incisors of a rodent are always in two pairs, one in either jaw, separated by a wide space from the molars and other teeth, long and sharp with the age of the dwarfish animal. Ichcapilli discovered on the instep of Quetzal's left foot the marks of four teeth—peculiar thin tiny marks caused by the nip of two pairs of chisel-like incisors. Radiating in a circle about the lethal prints was a swiftly swelling blotch, flaming malignant as with poison.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MORLEY'S WIFE

THAT night there was no moon. The desert, free from the torment of sun, lay in smooth undulations, sleek with sand-sheen, uneasy with shadows. Overhead, a thin lurid sheet of cloud formed a vault so ghastly as to pale into invisibility the stars. Below and nearer at hand a myriad of ragged whitish shreds—the flying scud of sailors—slipped past on even course, swift as if propelled by some immense breathing, paralleling the ground at so low a level that to reach up, it seemed, were to touch them. The air beneath was windless, inexplicably still and dead.

Moving against the scud, we darted bent-backed through the night that was electric with stealth and odd glow, across hummocks that glimmered like phosphorescence. We were encompassing the trough of the Japanese with an advancing ring of darkly naked men, their Mausers at the trail and metal barrels glinting.

On one side of me was Mariquita, the blue-nosed Colt in hand. Beyond her, polished sticks expectantly upraised, horns poised on nether lips as if caught in some startling posture of a photo-drama, were the buglers and two drummers, their copper-bottomed kettles glossy.

Metztli, the high priest, was on my other hand, the right hand which held the borrowed Colt. His long clay-molded curls dangled about his red-plastered face; the striped balbriggan underwear looked like a series of dark bars. In the palm of his brown hand, ready for casting, was the mouse-carved knife. At Metztli's signal, the buglers were to snap out a tantara, the drums to beat a devil's tattoo, and the lusty work of attack to commence.

Abruptly it seemed, come of our tenseness, although entirely expected, we topped the bald head of the highest mound in the vicinity and wavered for a breath in the advance, looking down at the Japanese encampment.

A startling picture was limned below. I had no eyes for the few kimonoed figures shuffling about the trough with that Oriental air of business, as if they had here existed all their lives. In the wide open trough had been achieved a miracle of transformation, a metamorphosis swift and complete as though conjured up by some rubbing of an Aladdin's lamp.

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Below, clinging like birds' nests to the soft slopes, their sills plump in the sand, were a dozen tiny houses, minutely mortised and joined. They were frail as egg-shells, dainty as jewels. The peaked roofs of wattled laths extended out in conical eaves to serve as awnings over verandas a step off the ground. The lacquered boards shone satiny smooth in the twinkle of paper lanterns, hanging from concealed brackets like eery floating balls of gossamer. The white panelings of rice-paper were silhouetted with filigrees of flowers and monstrous formal black insects, and composed walls so filmy the redness of braziers could be seen behind.

Reared in a day by many yellow hands with timbers and carvings that every last one had freighted from Nippon, it was a perfect gem of a Japanese village. A camel-humped bridge swung over the black trickle of stream, and the source of the stream gushing from the brown rock was enshrined with tiling, heavy ribbed, crested, and of the sacred red of religion.

There was a swift impression of rectangular mats of plaited rushes, blinds of split bamboo with silken tassels, doors that slid noiselessly in grooves, and gable-ends that were carved and curved like writhing beasts.

In the center of the trough, where the fire of greasewood had crackled the night prior, was now a larger house, raised several feet off the sand and of a uniform religious red throughout. Its steep crown of ruby tiling flattened out and uptilted into eaves, bracketed with heavy carvings, flourished like twisted horns. The architraves of the doorways protruded in ornamental angles and beneath the sliding paper panels were fantastically decorated and glistened with metal clasps.

The edifice had the appearance of a Buddhist temple. A raised gallery surrounded it, approached by a flight of stairs in the exact center of the façade. Below the gallery was the *godonn*, the mysterious treasure room of Japanese temples, its apertures grated with iron bars.

Those bars were not the only sinister features marring the picture. Pacing, with the slow measured tread of sentries through the sand on each of the four sides of the temple, was a pigmy Japanese. Two of the four wore the garish flowing kimonos and white sweat bands of the prospective orchilla-gatherers.

The other two were saffrony naked, save for breech-clouts and the large inverted bowls of sun-hats which gave them the appearance of animated mushrooms. These two were of the Devoted Ones from the crew of the schooner. As each swung about at the end of his beat, there was in the luminous night, a faint scintilla from the knife in sash or breech-clout.

The guards and barred apertures corroborated the report of Ichcapilli. He had stated that his scouts had witnessed that afternoon the transportation of the captive crew of the sub-chaser. They had been hedged about by knife-wielding yellow men and forced like dumb driven cattle over the sand to the trough. One had been carried none too gently in a stretcher, no doubt wounded Jim Hathaway. All had been locked up in the underground barred apartment beneath the *teocalli*, as the Indians called the temple.

SEATED on the gallery of the temple, before the paneled doorway and about a tabaret upon which was a lacquer tray with tea cups and cigarets, were what appeared to be four men, fairly visible in the glow of light from sconces hidden within. One was the tall spare figure of Suzunoya-no-Koji, the high-crowned Korean hat shadowing his slant eyes, the twin tufts of Chinese mustaches black lines over his mouth corners, and the short curved sword glinting in his golden girdle and blue robe shimmering with its embroidery of black mice, dun mice, gray mice and golden.

Chubby-faced Kit Morley was another, in slouch fatigue hat, knee buttoned army trousers, woolen socks and stout shoes. I could tell from the glint of light on the polished visor of the white-topped cap, that the short stocky figure in the dimness off to one side was the Japanese skipper, Captain T. Yasuhara.

The fourth form, dapper and small, was not that of a man, I swiftly perceived. It was that masculine-affecting person, Mrs. Morley. Her hat was off and the poorly dressed dark hair showed in large enveloping rolls like a marcelled wig. I was surprised to note that a cigaret was pasted on her thin nether lip.

I made out the four and who they were within an indivisible point of time. Well, abruptly as I sighted them, I heard a choking gasp beside me, then a wild sharp cry, and without waiting for Metztli's signal Mariquita swept down the slope toward the village, Colt in hand, shrieking as if mad.

"It's he!" she was crying. "Serafin Dicental In female trappings, powder and wig!"

The three men and the woman leaped afoot on the gallery, knocking over the tabaret with a tiny crisp tinkling of breaking crockery. Morley's wife sprang forward, revolver in hand. She sighted a bare trice, let go full at the excitedly flying figure of Mariquita, outlined against the spangled sand.

My gun was up; two reports split the air like echoes of that first shot, one mine, the other Mariquita's; and Mrs. Morley fell forward and slid head first down the stairs, her arms out and waving like those of a battling swimmer.

I was racing down the slope after Mariquita. I could hear the drums rolling, the shrill

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flourish of trumpets, the hysterical chatter of guns all about. Small whitish balls of smoke were visible in the lambent night, ringing the circling dunes and, down in the trough, inexplicable small volcanoes were spurting up the sand.

Women with the coarse black hair of virility were fleeing out of the bungalows, their kimonos flying about polished legs, children dragging to their skirts. The popping of rifles seemed to carry an undernote of screaming and infernal chatter.

"Fire at the leaders!" I shouted, brandishing the Colt and suiting the action to the words. "Fire at the men on the porch!"

I was swiftly fearful for the fleeing helpless ones. I had realized that the Guiacuras were after all only Indians and therefore, ere leaving the mesquite flat, strenuously seconded by Mariquita, I had made it plain to Metztli that there should be no harming of women and children. Ours was a campaign, I had told him, to excite terror and quick submission by show of noise and strength. Whatever of venom it might contain was to be concentrated wholly against the leaders—those now upon the temple gallery.

Metztli had answered pridefully that the Guiacuras did not wage war on women. Yet he had taken the precaution, I had noticed, to repeat my injunction to the well-disciplined and soldierly bucks.

Of course in such a general riot there was always the chance of accidents from wild or ricocheting shots. I could see for instance as I pursued down the slope in headlong dash, inoffensive lanterns shot away, as if extinguished by an unseen hand, or flickering in the breath of bullets that had carried away the paper sides.

Black holes from stray lead were dotting and rending the white panels of houses. Men in shorter robes were darting about like a flurry of rats, rats of all shades of yellow, gamboge, jaundice and citron.

Once again, as in the boarding of the *Seventy-three* the night prior, I was exalted by intense excitement, by the life and death turmoil, into that clear hypersensitive state where every sound and sight within range of ear and eye etched itself like acid, swiftly and ineradicably into my mind. Otherwise, I cannot conceive how I should have been able to gain all these vivid impressions in that fleeting ace of time which it took Mrs. Morley to slide to the bottom of the stairs.

Really I had eyes only for the drama of the temple steps. I saw, as I raced down the slope, the sprawling figure of Mrs. Morley reach the sand at the foot of the stairs and there perform an odd slow somersault.

Her head twisted under her; the trousered legs lifted heavily, hung for an intolerable moment in the air, then slapped over with such wrenching suddenness as to sever, it seemed, her neck, for—horrible sight—I saw her head roll off to one side.

She straightened out stiffly. I perceived then that what I thought was her decapitated head was only the dark marcelled hair—a wig in truth—which had slipped off in the somersaulting and rolled to one side.

Her head free from the wig was amber-bright with blondness. Mariquita, in all the turbulence of excitement, had correctly pierced the disguise. The personage whom we had thought was Morley's wife was none other than Serafin Dicenta.

The Mexican had played his usual rôle of wolf in sheep's clothing. Perhaps the unhallowed success which had attended his efforts as a Colorado in the uniform of a lieutenant of Carranza, had furnished the idea. At any rate, through the agency of the female guise, and to be sure, Kit Morley, he had escaped the police of San Francisco. He had deceived every man of the sub-chaser, save of course Morley, to the end that he might share in the spoils of the expedition, the ultimate division of the chest of gold that honestly belonged to Mariquita.

The feminine masquerade had been characteristically a most subtle and unscrupulous weapon. It was a disguise to thwart detection from Mariquita, should she be awaiting us at Magdalena; an insidious instrument under cover of which to cast aspersions on the girl, so that we should utterly discredit her story of his own Judas dealings. But he was dead now, to judge from that uncanny convulsive somersault—dead with all his elaborate treachery come to naught.

EVERYTHING was shut from view on a sudden as pursuing Mariquita, I darted round a tiny bungalow perched on the slope, Metztli and his tattooing drummers and buglers clamoring behind. Like an evil clutching arm, a thick spiral of black smoke shot out at me with swishing noise as I made by the house.

It banked and convoluted, in the windless air, shadowy and fearsome as some ogre raised by a spell. Then with monstrous roar a sheet of forked gold, avid flame, shattered the opacity of smoke and leaped ecstatically, crackling and bellowing, toward the low-flying scud above.

The debacle of the Arabian Nights' village was complete. Others of the tinder-dry flimsy structures were afire, ignited by the shattered paper lanterns, the hot boring of stray bullets. Shaking light trembled all about, tinging with coppery lustre the whitish shreds of clouds above. There were loud sucking inhalations of heat, unexpected disruptions of paper walls and blown roofs, a stupendous crackling and

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winging of flames that lashed about with greedy energy, as if whipped by some violence of wind where no wind stirred.

The general vibrating rumble drowned every other sound—the shrill of the frightened women, the weird high jabber of the men, the hysterical chatter of the rifle fire. Although impossible to hear myself, I think I was shouting insanely as I broke through the smoke, flame and falling cinders. I could sense the close presence behind me of Metztli and his noise-makers, though there was no catching the din of drum or horn. I had lost entirely, in dashing round the house, all sight of Mariquita ahead in the seethe and glare.

I made up the trough toward the temple. I could not afford to look for Mariquita. For a time she would have to shift for herself. It was my resolve to break into the temple and rescue wounded Jim Hathaway and the incarcerated crew. Any moment, in the sweeping conflagration, the fragile fane, dry as toast, might fire and the whole helpless crew be caught like horses in a burning barn.

Everything was happening with breathless rush in an ace of time. Robed figures slipped past me, inoffensive, frantically affrighted, bent only on escaping the holocaust, stumbling, falling, scurrying in a mad dash up the slopes and full into the arms of the onswooping Indians. Most of the women and children had already vanished to unexpected safety that way, a deal more frightened than physically harmed.

Ahead the temple uplifted its façade, garishly red in the glare and still fortunately immune. I could make out Suzunoya-no-Koji coming down the staircase, two steps at a time, his blue robe upheld by one yellow hand, the short curved sword drawn from the golden girdle and glinting in the other hand, ready for business.

A leap behind was the Japanese skipper, his white-topped cap gone, probably shot away, his right arm bent and braced against one hip, the clutched revolver constantly jumping with reports I could not hear. Kit Morley was nowhere to be seen.

All at once, as I pursued swiftly near, I descried above on the gallery, a pair of knee-trousered, stout-shoed legs sticking out from a great rent in the red-papered wall. A bullet had got Kit Morley, snuffing life no doubt, pitching him over on his back through the paneling.

Suzunoya-no-Koji was at the bottom of the stairs and all that separated us was the outstretched form of Serafin Dicenta, rigid with death as the leather puttees about his legs. I was so dangerously close to the yellow czar I could note, in the swift fraction of time, the peculiarities of his Oriental eyes—the indefiniteness of the osseous ridges, the upward slant of lids toward the outer corners, the double folds of flesh, in the inner corners, overlapping the rims of the upper lids and concealing all sign of lashes.

His sleek face was a sickly hue, a pearly yellow as with fright; but his hairless eyes were glittering into mine, beady and unblinking, as if he saw in me some means of escape or of salient revenge.

But he did not slash at me with the sword. He dropped his robe, on the instant, and reached up the freed yellow hand, as if to ease his brow of the weight of that tall hat.

Instantly I knew. He was about to uncover and set upon me those poisonous spotted mice. I cried out and leaped back, quivering with abnormal loathing, bringing up the Colt. Something whistled by my ear. I saw the muddy face of the Japanese captain behind the Mouse-Man, his revolver raised. A bullet from that revolver, I was sure, had just grazed me.

Then and all in the same moment, before ever I could shoot, I saw the Koji's yellow hand drop like a slug of lead and noticed at the throat of his blue robe the glint of vibrating steel. It was a knife impaled almost to its ivory handle—the mouse-carved knife Metztli had held poised all along in his hand. It was that knife which had whistled by my ear as the high priest hurled it from immediately behind me.

Suzunoya-no-Koji choked and sought to cough. He threw up his arms, all at once, the sword flinging away, the slender fingers doubled with tensity, and the wide sleeves slipping down to expose the yellow thinness of arms. He tried to shout out; his impearled face swelled and glowed tawny with congested blood; he could not even breathe. Soundlessly he fell forward on his face almost at my feet, the long tapering fingers clutching the sand.

I found myself covering the Japanese skipper with the Colt, and shouting in a crazed chant:

"Drop it! Hoist your fins! Drop that gun and hoist your fins!"

I thought the captain had gone mad. He was dancing about, without heed to my commands, trampling the sand, stumbling against the still figures on the ground, leaping over them, his cheeks sucked in, his eyes on the sand, his revolver pumping lead into that sand with frenetic haste. The Korean hat had been flung from the head of the Koji in his death fall and the white mice, released, were darting about.

I BELIEVE, though I am not sure, that my shouts broke in a thin scream. I only know that I went insane then, clean through, leaping off the sand as though each grain were a fervid coal, jerking the Colt trigger distractedly, spouting lead without pause down at those red-specked white rodents that seemed myriad and everywhere at once.

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It was abominable. I turned one over with a bullet. But it was up again and away like a ghastly streak. I spun another in the air with the velocity of the lead clipping underneath. I fired again ere it reached the ground; I fired several times before I was aware that the hammer was snapping on dead caps or cartridges, I did not know which.

I hopped about as if my *guarachas* were burning, breaking open the weapon, frantically jamming in cartridges, dropping any number between quivering fingers. I thought to hear the mice clicking their teeth in the heat of their frenzy. Then I was firing again, spurting up the sand so that it resembled between the onslaught of the Japanese skipper and myself, the spouting of many small volcanoes.

It was all over. I felt a supreme relief and then, on the back of it, a vast surprize as I noted that there were only three mice lying dead and shattered with bullets in the sand. They had seemed myriad.

Some one dashed in between the Japanese captain and me; was down beside the rigid form of Dicenta; was unbuckling with quick trembling fingers the leather puttees. It was Mariquita. Out of each unfastened legging dropped documents, sealed and bulky—the deeds of the Hacienda del Cazadero! There was the reason, irrefutably revealed, why "Morley's wife" had so persistently worn the puttees.

I covered the captain, the Colt wavering in my still twitching hand.

"Throw away your gun, Yasuhara!" I cried. "Up with your hands!"

Even as his gun thudded in the sand, I saw, behind the skipper to one side of the stairs, a face at a barred aperture of the *godonn*. It was a red face with small deep-set eyes—the face of Jim Clee, the ship's cook.

"Get out of there, you —— fool!" I shouted in mad joy and without waiting to turn the Japanese skipper over to Metztli undoubtedly behind me, or Mariquita gathering up the documents—trusting indeed to luck that should the captain stoop to recover his weapon, some one near by would get the drop on him—up the staircase I leaped and through a panel to release the crew and rescue poor Jim Hathaway.

THE Log of the *Seventy-three* states very barrenly that "at sunset of June 19th, the Japanese top-sail schooner, *Taisei Maru*, Captain T. Yasuhara commanding, port of departure, Honolulu, was sighted entering Magdalena Bay, came to an anchorage alongside, put ashore a party of one hundred Japanese, bound for the mainland of Mexico, and laid over in the berth to replenish, next day, her water-breakers. Colors were struck, aboard the *Seventy-three* at sun-down." Then a blank sheet followed.

"Her water-butts replenished by the crew, who fell to this work after lightening the hold of all house-frames and crates, the Japanese topsail schooner, *Taisei Maru*, put out to sea.

"Aboard her at the time were the shore party, who had been turned back from their venture, through trouble with the vicinal Indians and especially because of the loss of their leader, known as Suzonoya-no-Koji or the Mouse-Man. The shore party, when it trooped aboard, numbered less than the original hundred on account of the killing of several of the men, as well as the leader, by the Indians. It was determined before anchor was weighed, however, that none of the women or children had been harmed beyond the mental hurt caused by deep fright. The *Taisei Maru* cleared, at 10:30 P.M., for the port of Honolulu.

"The crew of the *Seventy-three* are once more aboard, sound and intact, save for the loss of Christopher Morley and the Mexican, who masqueraded as a woman, Serafin Dicenta. Both these men also killed in the fracas with the Indians.

"The personnel of the sub-chaser, while changed for the better in character, is still the same, in point of numbers, as when departure was taken from the Farralones. The elimination of Morley and Dicenta has allowed room for the booking of two fair passengers—friends of skipper, mate and entire crew—Miss Mariquita Cristine Arillaga and Miss O Haru.

"Miss O Haru, who is a former member of the Japanese shore party, was guided to the ship by Acolhua, an Indian scout. A mere child of fifteen cherry-blossom seasons, she has long desired to reside in California. Mate Chester Overman has resolved to adopt her.

"Miss Mariquita Arillaga will divide the gold among those taking part in the adventure. She will return to President Carranza the deeds of her estate in payment for it. It is also Miss Arillaga's intention, as expressed while crossing the desert, this evening, after the trouble in the trough——"

I paused. No; that last sentence was begun wrongly; it couldn't hope to do justice to the delicacy of the idea. I made a neat erasure.

Then dipping the pen in the well, I ended:

"When the *Seventy-three* drops Punta Entrada in its wake and cleaves outside the three-mile boundary limit of Mexico, where the skipper will be in supreme command, Captain Jim Hathaway while still no doubt confined to his bunk will be called upon to perform in the cabin, a certain solemn ceremony. Miss Arillaga plighted her troth with Mate Chester Overman, while crossing the desert this evening, and the ceremony, tomorrow, will be that of holy matrimony."

I signed the log as is customary, but with a flourish that was far from my usual hand.

THE END

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A Coat of MAHOGANY

by Roy P Churchill

Author of "Esprit de Corps," "Mixing In," etc.

THERE'S one kind of Navy target-practise where you don't have to stuff cotton in your ears to protect your ear-drums, and some mess-boy with the left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit caught in the dark of the moon, has as good chance for high scoring as gun-pointers and range-finders.

"Shoot twenty dollars for the coat," says "Stormy" Jones, clicking the dice in his hand. "Here's where I make a field-day."

"Fade," says Bert Lamont, and lays the new leather garment beside Stormy's two tens. "Here's where I send you back to the boat to eat."

"A nickel is a nickel and a dime is a dime, and a dollar looks good to me all o' the time," sings "Hasty" Day, who has won ten dollars and dropped out.

"Give me room," says Stormy Jones, uncovers his tousled red hair and shoots the dice over the board on top of an empty barrel.

"Four and three, all coming to me. Read 'em and grieve," says Stormy. "Anybody else want action?"

But the bunch back of Kelly's pool-hall has had enough. Stormy picks up the coat and money and turns to Hasty Day.

"Let's go," he says.

Hasty shakes his head:

"No, boy. Luck's due to change. Six natural passes makes the law of average due to take a swipe at anybody that's around. On your way."

Stormy admires himself in the show-windows as he goes up-town. He's put on the coat, which is dark mahogany color with a fur-lined collar, and he thinks it looks right nifty on a gob.

But a window-display of leather coats stops the sport, and Stormy takes his coat off in a hurry. He knows then why people have been staring and grinning.

"Belongs to a Jane," he mutters with disgust. "Wonder where this bird calling himself Lamont got it?"

And then Stormy gets a bright idea, which wipes Lamont out of his mind, for not only is Stormy carrying a winning-streak, but he has a plush box in his pocket and in the box a diamond ring for Katie Fletcher, if she will take it and promise to marry him as soon as he gets a month's furlough. Stormy thinks Katie might as well have the coat, too.

In a minute he's in a telephone-booth breaking the news and Katie says to come on over to the place where she works, to see if it fits.

They go to a dance that evening, with Katie wearing both the ring and the coat, and Stormy hardly able to act decent for wanting to shout the glad tidings. He figures that his run of luck is lashed to the mast and all secure.

The first disturbance comes the next morning as Stormy sends the day's signals from the bridge of the flagship *Mynton*. Lieutenant Towne, the signal officer, is just as far in the depths as Stormy is on top of the world. He snaps the orders, finds fault with the hoists and carries a scowl like the business-end of a six-inch. Before long up comes one of his pals and they get to talking about an advertisement in the morning paper.

"I'm going off duty at eight and ashore in the first boat," says Towne's friend. "Maybe I can get a line on something."

"It's Grace's coat," says Towne, "That new mahogany shade with a fur collar. She took

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off the ring because it cut her glove and dropped it down in the side pocket. Then she took the coat off and lost it out of the machine. That's all there is to it."

"The diamond you gave her?"

Towne nods—

"She has no more chance of finding it than I have of buying her another."

"What do the police think?"

"They don't think. Somebody saw a sailor wearing a woman's leather coat that fits the description, but look how they bungled this booze-peddling that the skipper is so keen to get by the heels."

Stormy is listening so close that he forgets the message he is sending, and stops in the middle of a word, giving Lieutenant Towne another chance to bawl him out.

It's not Stormy's day off, but it's urgent and important to get ashore somehow, buy another coat for Katie and put the one she has into the hands of the proper owner. Cold chills creep up his spine as he remembers searching the pockets as soon as he put the coat on and finding nothing in them. It looks plain to Stormy that Lamont has found the coat and taken out the ring before he lost it to him in the crap-game. To keep himself in the clear Lamont must be found and made to give up the ring.

Stormy knows how to work fast, and stepping down from the grating, he trips himself and rolls over on the deck. It's a regular movie fall, but Lieutenant Towne's mind is elsewhere, and the register is O. K.

Stormy is holding his bean-basket and rolling on the deck.

"It's cramping awful, sir," he says, screwing up his face.

"What did you eat yesterday?" asks Towne, bending down, for he is a good scout when the play will let him.

"Crab salad," groans Stormy, "ice-cream, pickled pigs' feet, ginger ale, apple-fritters prune-pie——"

"That'll do," says Towne. "Get below to the doctor. What do you think you are? A State food-exhibit?"

One of the quartermasters helps Stormy down the ladder and in five minutes he has recovered, slipped another signal boy ten dollars to stand the watch and swapped places with him for the liberty-party just ready to shove off.

BERT LAMONT has his own reasons for watching the classified advertisements, and he is waiting on the dock when Stormy gets ashore. Stormy begins to feel easy when he sees him. Everything looks simple enough. He will make Lamont come across with the ring, get the coat from Katie and take both back to Lieutenant Towne. He ducks down until the boat reaches the dock for fear Lamont will see him and try to get away. But Lamont is just as anxious to see Stormy as Stormy is to see him.

"Hello," says Stormy. "I want to see you a minute."

"Suits me," says Lamont. "Come on up to Kelly's."

Few men are ashore this early in the day and the pool-hall is almost deserted. With a vision of Katie getting mixed up in the disappearance of the coat, Stormy wastes no time in coming to business.

"Where's the ring that was in the coat I won?" he says, getting in reaching-distance of Lamont, where he leans against a pool-table. "I know who the coat and ring belong to."

"So does everybody," sneers Lamont. "Don't you think I can read? I missed the ring going through the pockets, so you've got that piece of ice hid away yourself. That's why I waited down at the dock. Give 'em both up, or I'll turn you over to the cops. One of 'em saw me with the coat. Where'd you leave that?"

"None of your business," says Stormy, getting sore and looking around to see who is watching. He's been hoping to dodge the rough stuff, but there's Katie to be protected, and no time for indirect methods. He makes a quick move, clinches and slams Lamont back over the pool-table.

"Gimme the ring," he says, hoping one lesson will be enough, but Lamont whirls aside before Stormy can get a grip on him and snatches a billiard-cue, swinging the butt-end toward Stormy's head.

Stormy ducks in under the swing, getting a stinger across the shoulder from close up to Lamont's hands, but gripping the cue and snatching it away. Lamont is wiry and quick, but Stormy is in the same class with more tonnage. He backs away around the table with Stormy after him, and a big rough fellow, who has been smoking a pipe in the other end of the hall and paying some attention, gets up and starts toward them.

"What ship do you belong to?" asks Stormy of Lamont. "I don't believe you're a sailor at all. You're a crook, disgracing the uniform."

Lamont is facing the big man, and he nods to him just as Stormy sees a chance to rush. The two of them clinch and go to the floor with Stormy finding Lamont hard to hold down, but getting him underneath finally, with his knees on Lamont's arms and a grip on the throat with one hand while he goes through the pockets with the other.

"Let him up," says the big man behind Stormy, but Stormy is too busy to listen. He's just pulled out a sack of makings from the upper breast pocket and is feeling in its bottom with his fingers when a red-hot shock as if he connected with a live wire shoots through him from where something hit the back of his head,

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and he slips over sidewise beside Lamont.

"You ought to be careful who you pick on, Slim," growls the big man, laying down the billiard-cue and lifting Stormy. "Open the door to Pete Kelly's storeroom. We'll shove him in there and shoot him out the back way when he comes to. Good thing nobody is around. I was afraid he would get to the list of stuff we've just delivered. He might be somebody the Navy-bunch has set after us."

"No chance, Monk," says Lamont. "This bird is a plain gob. I know him. It's a little private scrap between us."

Then he goes through Stormy's pockets, but fails to find the ring.

Stormy Jones' thick mop of red hair and his stiff-stitched white hat cushioned the blow of the billiard-cue, and it's not long after Monk Hiser and Lamont left him in the storeroom that he comes to, gets up feeling kind of dizzy, and tries the door. It is locked and has a double sheeting of oak on the inside.

Stormy is anxious to get away. Every minute that passes things are piling up on him. He has not found the ring, and he has not gotten the coat from Katie. Before long she will be dressing for the afternoon, it being Saturday, and if she wears the coat she is apt to get pinched, while Bert Lamont, who could clear up the affair, will be getting away from Kelly's as fast as he can. The big idea now is to get out, buy a new coat of a different color and persuade the girl that it is more becoming. Stormy tells himself that he should have done this in the first place.

The windows of the storeroom are barred, and around the sides of the room are kegs and bottles, some empty and some filled with sirups and flavors used at Kelly's soda-fountain. There are some brown bottles labeled "Not alcohol" and Stormy grins as he pulls the metal cap from one of them and tastes the contents.

"Everything but the authority," he thinks and then stops with a splutter, for the fiery liquid almost strangles him.

"Holy heroes, what a kick!" he says, feeling the stuff burn all the way down. "Lead out the fire-hose and sound collision-drill!"

Finding the hootch in Kelly's storeroom gives Stormy something more to think about, but makes him wish the whole world wouldn't try to sit in his lap at once.

"There ought to be some way out of this place," he says to himself, and begins looking again, uncovering a ring-bolt in the floor, half-covered with trampled straw, and lifting up a section of floor which lets him into the cellar.

MEANWHILE Bert Lamont and Monk Hiser get some news which makes them far from happy. A bunch of customers drifts in and then out, and Pete Kelly calls them over to a little office behind the soda-fountain. Just about this time Stormy finds his way into the cellar, and the cracks around a drain-pipe enable him to hear most of what is said.

"There's going to be a raid, I tell you," Kelly is saying. "It's come too straight to be monkeyed with. Put the whole business in the launch and take it back to the island. Get the machine outside and bring it around to the back. You ought to move it in two loads."

Monk Hiser grumbles something and Stormy hears him start away. He knows they expect to find him in the storeroom, gentle enough to handle, so he hurries up the steps, drops the trap in place and is sitting on the floor, leaning against an empty cask, when Hiser unlocks the door. Lamont has gone for the machine that Kelly mentioned, and the big man twists a hand-hold into Stormy's collar and lifts him to his feet.

"Get out of this," he says, like he meant it. "One of the other gob's pals hit you with a cue. Pete says he wants no fighting around this place. Travel while you're able."

Stormy has his own idea about who hit him, but Hiser is too big for him. He mumbles some thanks, and staggers out the door. In two minutes he is in a telephone-booth and Katie Fletcher is listening.

"I don't like that coat so much since I've seen some others," Stormy is saying. "What do you say you don't wear it? I'll bring along a nifty tan one or a green one. What——"

"You needn't bother," says Katie. "I have no intention of wearing the coat, or any other one." Then she hangs up the receiver and won't answer any more.

At the rear of Kelly's a small truck is being loaded from one of the storeroom windows and the load appears to be the accumulation of old sirup jugs, bottles and cases which would be emptied at a busy soda-fountain. Hiser and another man are doing the work while Lamont sits on the driver's seat. Stormy keeps out of sight and goes back to try again to telephone Katie. Something has happened, but he doesn't know what.

The truck is just driving off down the street when he comes from the booth without getting Katie. Lamont is in the driver's seat alone and plumb out of luck on one tack. Stormy makes a sprint, catches the truck and climbs on board.

"Give me a lift to the dock," he says, stepping over the cases and bottles until he stands behind the driver's seat. "What about that ring, Lamont?"

"Yeah, what about it?" says Lamont.

Lamont's sureness makes Stormy uneasy. Suppose he hasn't found the ring? Another failure just then is not pleasant to Stormy, but if he can't hang one thing on Lamont, he can another.

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"What have you got here?" he asks.

"Load of junk for the commissary steward," answers Lamont, glib as a sea-lawyer at the mast. "He wants a lot of empty bottles and jugs to store stuff in. I picked him up a load at Kelly's."

"I see you did," says Stormy. "The old stew-bum ought to be glad to get 'em. Too bad some of the stuff is leaking away."

"Think you're a wise *hombre*, don't you?" says Lamont, looking to where Stormy points out some amber liquid, oozing from one of the cases. "You better beat it while you're all in one piece."

"So your friend Monk tipped me off," says Stormy, and drops off the end of the truck to the street. The scent is too fresh in more ways than one, and Kelly had mentioned Pier Fourteen and the name of the launch.

Stormy cuts around back streets and gets to Pier Fourteen by the time Lamont unloads and starts back to Kelly's for the second load. Opposite the craft is the row of empty bottles and jugs which covered up the filled ones.

An older counterpart of Lamont, wearing a torn suit of old clothes, is pottering around on the deck of the launch. He pushes up a battered felt hat when Stormy stops on the dock above him, and his little red-rimmed eyes don't look inviting.

"Hello," says Stormy. "Why don't you throw a tarpaulin over the evidence on the dock?"

The man looks Stormy over, trying to see where he fits in.

"You're Bert's dad," went on Stormy, taking a chance.

"What if I am?"

"Well, Kelly and the big fellow they call Monk want you to keep a good lookout."

"What for?" says Lamont, not thawing any, but before he can say anything more Stormy jumps down to the deck of the launch.

"Where have you got the stuff stowed?" he asks.

"Climb back on the dock, young fellow," says the boat-keeper advancing.

"Get wise, can't you," says Stormy. "You're Bert Lamont's old man. You're taking some stuff from Kelly's over to the island because Kelly has heard of a raid on his place. Anything more you want to know?"

"Considerable. I'm Bert's dad all right, but this is a fishing-boat. I'm taking on some empties to carry fresh water in."

"Forget it," says Stormy, and dives in under the decked-over part of the launch. As he suspects, most of the contents of the truck are stowed inside her in neat rows. The leaking case smells the place up like a distillery.

"Come out of that," orders Lamont at the hatchway. He has picked up a metal belaying-pin and waves it inside the opening.

"All right," says Stormy, "have it your own way. I only wanted to check up and be sure I'd hit the right launch. Bert will O. K. me when he comes down."

The elder Lamont is plainly puzzled. Another party being in on the deal is new to him, but Stormy has bluffed so hard that he's half-convinced.

"Get on the dock and wait," says Lamont, and Stormy does as he is told. He has stumbled on something bigger than the lost coat, and knows how he can use it. The skipper of the *Mynton* would give his new sword to break up this gang of boot-leggers.

"Pass me up something and I'll cover this junk," says Stormy, and Lamont passes up some old sacking, grumbling as he does so.

"Nobody passing on this slip to amount to anything, young fellow. If what you're telling me is crooked, it'll go bad with you."

"Worry will kill you yet," says Stormy. "I'm going on up to the head of the dock to watch," and he starts off, wanting to hurry, but afraid the old man will get suspicious and move the craft if he goes into a telephone-booth too soon.

Half-way up the dock the truck meets him with Bert Lamont in the driver's seat. They have hurried the last load and Stormy is not expecting him back so soon. He puts up a hand to Lamont and the truck rolls up to him and stops.

"I want that ring," says Stormy, hopping aboard. "No stalling and sidestepping. What's more, I'm going to queer this launch-load of booze and put you in the kind of uniform you belong. Don't try to do any explaining. I heard what you and the big fellow said up at Kelly's. Come through, or it will be just that much worse for you."

If Bert Lamont had used good judgment, he would have tried to convince Stormy that he'd searched the coat without finding the diamond. But instead he uses sarcasm and bluff.

"Move over, your foot's asleep," he laughs at Stormy. "You copped the rock yourself, and if you try to ring in on this affair, there'll be a red-headed gob feeding the fish."

"I've told you," says Stormy. "Now tell your troubles to the cops," and he jumps off and starts up the dock.

"Stop!" hollers Bert Lamont, and runs after him.

Stormy faces about. They are fifty yards from where the launch is tied up, and the old man is down below, making room for the rest of the stuff. Stormy's idea is to finish up what he has started in the pool-hall before he is interrupted and then get away to a telephone. The sore spot on the back of his head reminds him that he owes Bert Lamont a swift punch or two.

But Lamont is taking no chances. Stormy swings at him as he comes on, but Lamont

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dodges, runs by him and picks up a heavy stick. He is now between Stormy and his getaway, and Stormy backs away, looking for a weapon. He finds none, and is maneuvering to make a rush and take the club away from Lamont, when Monk Hiser comes in sight from the street.

"A stool-pigeon," calls Bert Lamont. "Don't let him get away, Monk!"

With the two on his hands Stormy tries to run in under Bert Lamont's stick, to finish off one before the other can get to him, but the stick is shorter than the billiard-cue, and Stormy gets a thump across his neck, which rocks him, and the fist he slams into Lamont's face lacks steam. Lamont tries to get room to swing again, but Stormy gets to him with his left, and comes so fast that he gets both hands on the stick and jerks it away. He is just in time. Monk Hiser is coming full speed and swiping at the two of them, Stormy gets his back to the warehouse-shed.

"He heard what was said at Kelly's," says Lamont, "and is going to telephone the police."

"Fat chance," says Hiser. "I'll fix him."

But Stormy is not waiting for somebody else to make the first move. He whirls the stick over his head and sends it spinning at Monk Hiser. Hiser throws up his arms to ward it off, and Stormy's shoulder, as he rushes, hits him while he's off his balance, throwing the big man full-length on the dock. He is up like rubber, but Stormy has belted Lamont on the jaw, knocked him to one side and is sprinting up the dock as if he'd heard first call for chow.

It is Lamont Senior who turns the tables. Stormy has been too busy to notice everything, and the old man has climbed to the dock to take a hand. Stormy runs straight into his arms and the old piece of canvas which has been thrown over the empty bottles. The canvas goes over Stormy's head like a sack, and fight and squirm all he can, the lean old man, snarling with rage, holds him fast until Monk takes a hand.

"What'll we do with him, pop?" asks Hiser, sitting astride Stormy and holding him down. "He's a tough little devil."

"We ought to kill him," says the old man, "only it wouldn't be safe, and we can't leave him here. Tie him and throw him into the launch. Then we'll finish loading the stuff and pull out. We can decide what to do with him later."

"Keep him on the island and make him work," suggests Bert Lamont. "A couple of weeks of the right treatment ought to tame him down."

Stormy Jones lays quiet, getting his breath and wits back. The last five minutes have been speedy going.

"Suits me," says Hiser, and Stormy's arms and legs are tied and he is bundled into the launch along with the cargo of filled cases.

Then they put on the second truck-load and before a great while Stormy hears the gasoline engine begin to turn over and feels the launch move off through the water. After that Monk Hiser comes down and unties him.

"Now is as good time as any to start you in," says Monk. "You'll find some canned stuff up forward and a couple of loaves of bread. Break it out and get it ready for the rest of us to eat."

WITH Stormy's persuading voice far away, and the thrill of sporting a new leather coat before the other girls at the dance all over, Katie Fletcher reads the advertisement about the lost coat in the morning paper. Then she goes hurriedly through the pockets. Stormy has been sort of vague as to where he got the coat, and Katie decides to think the worst and play safe. If Stormy can explain where he has bought the garment and all about it, good enough, but she means to let him do it. She takes off the ring, too, puts it in the box and into a pocket of the coat. Then she ties the coat in a bundle, writes Stormy's name on the outside, and sends it down to the dock by messenger. The coxswain of the skipper's launch is just about to shove off, and he promises the messenger-boy safe delivery.

But when he gets the boat hauled out and comes on deck, Stormy has left the other gangway in the liberty-party. The coxswain hunts up a friend of Stormy's, turns the package over to him and goes back to his job.

It's a bad morning aboard the *Mynton*, for the skipper has just got the report from Kelly's pool-hall that nothing in the hootch-line has been found, and Pete is swearing he is going to sue somebody for interfering with an honest man's business. To get even, the skipper springs a bag-inspection on the unsuspecting crew, and with no warning at all finds plenty of contraband.

Katie's bundle with the leather coat of mahogany shade is stowed away inside Hasty Day's locker and being on watch, Hasty has no chance to hide it away.

"What's that?" snaps the captain, pointing as if he'd found a coal-heaver on the quarter-deck. A petty officer hauls it out, and breaks the string. Lieutenant Towne butts in, whispers to the skipper, and takes charge. A minute after that he's asking for Stormy Jones, for Katie writes a plain hand, and there can't be any mistake.

"He's gone ashore, sir," reports the messenger-boy who tries to find him. "Got Nicholson to stand his watch."

Lieutenant Towne does not know what to think. He is sure of the coat from the tailor's mark, and the ring-box is from the right jeweler, but the stone in the ring looks small.

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WITH the launch clear of the dock Monk Hiser and the two Lamonts feel safe. It's true they'd as soon not have a passenger, but by taking Stormy along, they have shut his mouth until the liquor can be safely hid away along with all signs of the moonshine-still which made it.

Santa Cruz Island is thirty miles away, and almost uninhabited, with plenty of mountains and cañons for hiding-places. With Pete Kelly's pool-hall as a distributing-point in Channel City business has been good. When raids are pulled off the booze disappears with no one suspecting Pop Lamont's fishing-launch. Lately his son Bert has put on a Navy uniform to help peddle the stuff.

Fortified with half a can of tomatoes and some cold meat, Stormy begins thinking about escape. The launch's course will take her by the *Mynton*, but not very close.

"You keep below, young fellow," orders Pop Lamont. "Somebody on the bridge of that ship of yours might pick up the uniform with a glass. You stay with him, Bert, for the same reason. And if he makes a crooked move, I give you leave to plug him. We've had trouble enough out of him as it is."

With the old man and Hiser on deck smoking their pipes Bert Lamont takes a seat near the gasoline engine where he can mind it, but not before he has opened a locker, taken out a revolver as big as a small cannon, and put it across his lap. Stormy sits farther forward on one of the cases containing the wet goods.

"Let that alone," says Lamont as Stormy lifts one of the bottles from the case and holds it up.

"Looks like the real old knockout drops," says Stormy, grinning a good deal friendlier than he feels. "A man ought to have something to drown his troubles. Ask the boss what he'll take for a couple of shots."

"Put it back!" says Lamont, picking up the weapon across his knees. "You think you're the original wise kid, but wait until you get a couple of weeks hash-slinging out on the island. The last one we had drowned himself after Monk beat him up a couple of times. He's a bad one when he's drinking, Monk is."

"All the same," says Stormy, "I'd give twenty good dollars to sample one of these bottles. How's chances?"

"Shut up!" says Lamont. "You heard what the old man ordered. Keep quiet or I'll take a shot at you for luck. Nobody would hear it this far out in the bay."

"Must be getting close to the old home," says Stormy.

"As close as you're apt to get for some time," says Lamont. "A half-mile is as good as a hundred now."

Stormy settles back among the cases as if he's satisfied, but he has no intention whatever of going to the island with this bunch. He drops a hand down over the neck of the bottle again, and fumbles with the other hand in his money pocket.

"Be a sport," he says. "Lemme have a drink. Here's the twenty dollars."

Lamont opens his mouth for a sarcastic comeback, but this is as far as he gets, for Stormy has swung the heavy bottle from its case and sends it spinning toward him. It strikes Lamont as he starts to get up, knocks him backward, and the revolver out of his hand. Another bottle hits him as he scrambles on the deck, and then Stormy snatches the hand-ax, secured in cleats over his head, and brings it down on the gasoline engine where it will do the most good.

"Shoot him, Bert!" yells Pop Lamont, dodging another bottle, but cut with the broken glass and half-blind with what's in them, Bert can't find his weapon. Monk Hiser lets out a string of cuss-words and comes jumping.

Stormy meets him with a bottle, throws the ax into the wrecked engine, and jumps overboard.

After the first dive to get clear, Stormy comes up and looks back. Monk Hiser is shaking his fist and Bert Lamont has found the revolver and kneels on the deck, pointing it. Stormy dives again and put another twenty yards between himself and the launch. Pop Lamont snatches the gun from Bert's hands.

"Not now," he says. "It's too late. We couldn't go get him if you hit him, and somebody'd find the body after they'd seen us shooting. Let him alone. He'll get tired and come back."

LIEUTENANT TOWNE is sending a message ashore to have the shore-patrol pick up Stormy Jones and bring him to the ship when a quartermaster sees Stormy coming, his red head bobbing through the waves. Lieutenant Towne runs to the port gangway and helps him aboard.

"Where have you been, Jones?" he demands.

"Ashore, sir," says Stormy, panting from the long swim. He has kicked off his shoes, lost his hat, and the salt-water is making his bruises sting.

"What do you know about a mahogany-colored coat that was lost?" says Towne, sticking to the one idea.

"I've been trying to get it," says Stormy, feeling sick all over, for he's just caught sight of the coat hanging over a hatch canopy where Lieutenant Towne has left it in his hurry to greet him.

The captain has heard the commotion, comes up behind Stormy and breaks in.

"What's this?" he wants to know in the voice that puts 'em away for five days' bread and water.

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Stormy turns to him and shoots the works.

"There's a cargo of booze out there in that launch, sir," he says. "There's a lot of it, sir. All they had up at Kelly's. I've put the engine out of commission with a hand-ax. But they might fix her up and get away."

The captain knows that Stormy's story can wait, since he is safe on board with no chance of getting away, and he gets out a hurry call for a detail of marines and the motor-launch, to see if he has told the truth.

"This fellow Lamont found the coat," Stormy is explaining, "and I won it from him back of Kelly's pool-hall."

"But the diamond ring," interrupts Towne. "Here's the coat safe enough. But what about the five-hundred-dollar ring that was in the pocket? This one is only half as big."

"Yes, sir," says Stormy, "that's my ring. It was all I could afford."

Towne throws up his hands and one of the signal-boys running down from the bridge with a message takes advantage of the lull to give him a slip of paper. It is from Towne's fiancée and he reads it twice, looking sort of foolish and dazed.

"——," he remarks. "Grace didn't put the ring in the leather coat pocket. Put it in her dress pocket. Dry-cleaner just called up. Found it there."

With the weight of care removed Stormy Jones' rebound is sure and quick.

"I'd like to have permission to change my clothes and go ashore, sir," he requests Lieutenant Towne. "My liberty is not up until eight o'clock. There's some explaining I ought to do."

"You can wait until tomorrow," says Towne. "The captain will want you to identify these people in the launch and ask some questions."

But the skipper is so pleased at the haul he makes, thanks to Stormy Jones, that by moving lively Stormy gets ashore again before the stores close, and the leather coat he takes to Katie as a peace-offering is as far from the shade of mahogany as it is possible to get.

AT THE DOCKS

by Glenn Ward Dresbach

SHIPS at the docks are never old to me—
The sooty tramps from wonderlands, that bear
Mixed cargoes, with a lumbering, sturdy air,
Look like adventurers our needs made be
The bearers of strange burdens. Heavily
They crawl to port, unload, then, free from care
Of rolling crates and bales, turn lightly where
New burdens wait them, coming in from sea.

Oh never old to me are ships that bring
The scents of anise and of tropic fruit,
The awed, still faces or the crowds as gay
As flags above them in their wandering.
Ships whistle greetings but to leave me mute
When they turn out again, and I must stay!

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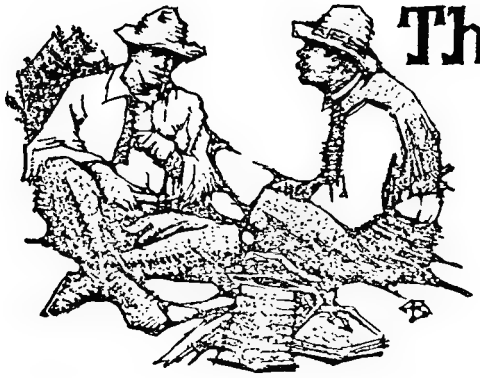

The Camp-Fire

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

A WORD from Robert J. Pearsall concerning his novelette in this issue:

San Diego, California.

The belief upon which *Koshinga's* plot is based, that Lao-Tse, founder of Taoism, and Gautama, the first of the Living Buddhas, were really one and the same individual, is actually held by a great many Chinese, including scholars. Since the two were contemporaneous, the time element can't be invoked to deny that belief. And the basic principles of the two religions are very much the same—also their modern decadence. The story is that Lao-Tse left China by way of the Sacred Pass I've mentioned (which pass is now actually filled up with the Gobi sand), thence through Tibet to India, where he established Buddhism, and that he was on his way back to China when he was translated. The difference in the names of the two religions and the two characters is attributed to difference in language. And, of course, religious Asia is always on tiptoe for another reincarnation of Buddha—which, according to this story, would also be a reincarnation of Lao-Tse. Also I will state again that the Ko Lao Hui is an actual society, or *tong*, constituted much as I've described in this and previous stories, which has played a large part in China's past and may play a larger part in her future—ROBERT J. PEARSALL.

THE article referred to by our Tennessee comrade was unfortunately too long to reproduce at Camp-Fire but maybe some of you can give us some first-hand information:

Langdon, N. D.

I'm strong for Camp-Fire because it's hallowed by the presence of great men. Then, too, I believe that it's a fundamental love of nature that "birds of a feather flock together." But the most useful thing about the Camp-Fire, apart from the information, is that when I meet a stranger who appeals to me I show him the Camp-Fire. And by their actions ye shall know him. Nuf said about this sort of thing.

I was born in the mountains of eastern Tennessee, consequently didn't get much "book learning," but in tramping round old "ma" earth I've been gathering up a little knowledge here and there and find archeology a wonderfully interesting study.

In the March 18, 1920, issue, Mr. Pendexter refers to a newspaper article describing the finding of red-blooded mummies in Grand Gulch, Utah. I'm enclosing this article, hoping you may give us a little more authentic dope on the subject.—MORRELL REED.

FROM E. S. Pladwell a brief word concerning his story in this issue:

Oakland, California.

The story follows fact almost word for word, although the hero of the original is a Piute over in Nevada. As a Piute is worse than an Apache by at least five layers of dirt, I decided to add class and romance to the tale by elevating the hero into an Apache, who at least has been known to bathe, although of course not intemperately—E. S. PLADWELL.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom Lynn Montross rises and introduces himself not on the occasion of his first story in our magazine, but with the appearance of his second. "In the Dark" was in our Mid-August issue.

Chicago, Illinois.

Introducing myself as a writer is a short task. My story, "In the Dark," is the first fiction yarn I've ever put over, indeed one of the first I've ever tried. It's based on an experience of my own overseas when I became a pal of an Australian by meeting him each night in a dark dugout. I'm writing to him yet but don't have much idea what he looks like—never saw him in the day.

As a human being I haven't much more to my credit than as a writer. In 24 years I've been hobo, university student, newspaperman and doughboy and have found tints of adventure in each of these occupations. There is, I'm pretty sure, some adventure to be found 'most any old place.

I am at present an editor on a newspaper and a Chicagoan by adoption and firm conviction.

I esteem this chance to break into print in "Camp-Fire" just as much as seeing my first fiction yarn in type. I can't imagine any more delightfully human and informal meeting-place. My hope is that I can live up to the pace already set and be of service some way or other—LYNN MONTROSS.

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HUGH PENDEXTER certainly gives us good measure. In addition to his stories themselves he nearly always tells us of Camp-Fire some interesting things about the times in which his stories are laid. Most of us like American history when a real human passes it to us. The following about his serial beginning in this issue:

Norway, Maine.

It is now known that Michael Cresap, so long blamed for the massacre of Logan's relatives and friends at Baker's Bottom, was in Red Stone at the time Joshua Baker and Daniel Greathouse, aided by a score of neighbors, killed the Indians when the latter came across the Ohio from their village on Yellow Creek. The accusations against Cresap made by Thomas Jefferson in his "Notes on Virginia" to the effect "A man infamous for the many murders he had committed on these injured people," was eliminated from the edition of 1800. Cresap was the son of Thomas Cresap, a noted Indian-fighter. The son was a trader, and although thirty-two years old at the time of Dunmore's war, was not famous as an Indian-fighter. In June, 1775, he marched 130 Maryland riflemen to Cambridge. That Fall he was taken sick and started for home. He died in October and was buried in Trinity churchyard, New York City, near the door of the north transept. Greathouse died of the measles in 1775.

IN 1774 Logan's home was at Old Chillicothe (modern Westfall) on the west bank of the Scioto, Pickaway County, Ohio. According to the evidence supplied by Frantz Mayer and others it would appear that Logan's sister, and possibly one other relative, were killed in the massacre, but his wife was not murdered; nor were his children, for he had none. Logan believed Cresap led the band of murderers and, after hostilities began, left a letter at a raided cabin in which he asked him why he had killed "my people." Logan was intemperate and after his removal to the Ohio he became a slave to drink, and in 1780 was killed by a nephew while returning from Detroit to the Ohio.

BALD EAGLE was killed by Hacker, Scott and Runner, and set adrift with a piece of journey-cake between his teeth, on the Monongahela. In the story I have him drifting down the Cheat. Crabtree killed Cherokee Billy, brother of Oconostota, as pictured in the story. The magistrates offered a reward of fifty pounds, and Dunmore of one hundred pounds, for Crabtree's arrest, but he was unmolested by the border men. Patrick Davis's cabin on Howard's creek was about the site of modern White Sulphur Springs. The route taken by Morris in crossing the mountains, when he rode to Salem, is practically the same as the road from White Sulphur Springs to Dunlap's Creek, and not far from the line of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. Governor Dunmore's complaint to Morris about the restless spirit of the frontiersmen was expressed by him in a letter to Earl Dartmouth, Colonial Secretary, in defending his course on warring against the Shawnee and other tribes.

I BELIEVE that somewhere in the story I have used the term "gunmen" in designating the number of warriors possessing fire-arms. If so it need not be considered an anachronism because of its modern use in designating a "gangster." As early as 1710 the French and English spoke of the Cherokee warrior armed with guns, as "gunmen."

BOONE was gone 62 days on his trip with Stoner to recall the surveying parties from the Falls of the Ohio. He traveled more than 800 miles, found the different bands and sent, or brought, them home. One authority has it that out of the 62 days he took enough time to build himself a log cabin on a likely spot of Kentucky land which appealed to him. It may be of interest to know that Benjamin Logan made one of the longest, swiftest, most arduous and dangerous trips ever accomplished by a white man traveling through a primeval forest when during the Revolutionary War he broke through an Indian blockade of Logan's fort in Kentucky and went for ammunition to the Holston. In all, he covered more than 200 miles, took back the ammunition, and did it in ten days. Because of the savages it was necessary for him to pick a route where no white man ever traveled before.

COUSIN'S death while wearing the scarlet coat was suggested by the death of Lieutenant John Frogg, of Staunton. He is described as being young, handsome and very gallant and fond of display. After the battle he was found with five dead savages heaped above his body.

Colonel Andrew Lewis was criticized by the unthinking because he remained behind the firing-line instead of leading his men against the savages.

Washington evidenced his appreciation of him by urging his appointment as commander-in-chief of the Continental army. Lewis was modern in his methods and realized that his place was where he could control his forces. He sacrificed a spectacular, pictorial part in order to win the battle.

CORNSTALK kept the peace he swore to Dunmore until 1777, although part of the Shawnees were strongly opposed to it. In '77 he went to Point Pleasant and notified the settlers he might be forced into war by his people. In recognition of his manliness in taking this course the settlers seized him and his son Ellinipsico and held them as hostages. They were murdered in retaliation for the death of a white hunter, and the Shawnees kept to the war-path until 1794.

BLACK HOOF, or Catahecassa, was born near the present Winchester, Ky., in 1740. He was active during the greatest period of activity of the Shawnees against the whites and was considered to be one of their greatest war-chiefs. He was at Braddock's defeat, Point Pleasant, the defeats of Harmar and St. Clair. When the British agents succeeded in stirring up Tecumseh to make war on the United States Black Hoof succeeded in restraining the greater part of the Shawnees. He died at Wapakoneta, Ohio, in 1831.

A hollow log was used by the Indians in an attack on Wheeling in 1781. They had captured a boat loaded with cannon-balls, sent from Fort Pitt to the Falls of the Ohio. They bound their wooden cannon with chains, and several were killed by the explosion.

Of the three white men who fought with the Indians at Point Pleasant, Collet was killed and his body identified by his brother; Ross returned to

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the settlements; Ward took an Indian wife and was killed in a fight in which the whites were led by his own brother, James Ward.

Colonel William Christian moved to near Louisville, Ky., in 1785. He married a sister of Patrick Henry. On April 9, 1786, he was mortally wounded by Indians. Because of the wounds received at Point Pleasant Colonel William Fleming was disabled for active service during the Revolutionary War, but was invaluable in organizing the frontier defense, as a member of the privy council, and in opposing Cornwallis' invasion while acting as governor. He died as the result of his wound in August, 1795.

Inasmuch as I have mentioned James Robertson, the "father of Middle Tennessee," who was a sergeant at the battle of Point Pleasant, it may be of interest to note that out of 250 men in his settlement of Nashville 229 died by violence inside of twelve years.

AMONG the sources of information used in building the story are:

Thomas Jefferson's "Notes on Virginia;" "Dunmore's War," compiled from the Draper manuscripts in the Library of Wisconsin Historical Society and edited by Thwaites and Kellogg; Withers' "Chronicles of Border Warfare," edited by Thwaites; "Virginia, its History and Antiquities," by Henry Howe; "Annals of the West," by Jas. H. Perkins; Gilmore's "Rearguard of the Revolution;" Shaler's "Kentucky;" A. S. Clark's "History of the Mississippi Valley;" James Hall's "Tales of the Border;" Dunbar's "History of Travel in America;" "Critical History of the United States," edited by Winsor; Helen A. Smith's "The Thirteen Colonies;" Roosevelt's "Winning of the West;" Doddridge's "Settlements and Indian Wars;" John Fiske's "The American Revolution."—HUGH PENDEXTER.

INDIANS turning white. Here's more about it and the possibility of still more, as I've written to Father Gagnieur as Mr. Cook suggested:

Houghton, Michigan

J. H. Anderson of Blackfoot, Idaho, has a note in "Camp-Fire" that got me started again. It must be more than a year since I started out to get for the brothers the real facts regarding "The-Disease-That-Turns-Indians-White—" it started with a story by the Pinkertons, didn't it?

FIRST, let me say that while the condition exists it is no more a disease than baldness or the loss of teeth in old age. The old Indian just naturally begins to turn white but never lives long enough to complete the transformation. I have lived among Indians or close to them all my life—the Chippewas, Ojibwas or Ochipwes or whatever Hugh Pendexter wants to call them. And they all begin to turn white when they get old. At the Indian reservation at Assinins in Baraga County, Mich., there is a full-blood named Pete Shelafoe, whose hands are as white as mine, and I am of the Norse type of Irish.

But what I started to tell you was this:

I wrote the Rev. Father William Gagnieur, S. J., Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., the only remaining Jesuit missionary among the Indians of Northern Michigan. He ought to know the Indian ideas on this subject. The Michigan Historical Society considers him the foremost authority on the Michigan Indian. He has lived among the Indians so long that he has grown somewhat like them, at least in the matter of shyness. He has promised to investigate the matter for me—did so a year ago. I hate buck-passers, but I have a hunch that Father Gagnieur will not bother with me, and for that reason I suggest that Camp-Fire write him at the address given. This is a worth-while subject for investigation and the good father probably would take more of an interest if asked by a stranger. The buck has passed.—L. P. COOK.

OHIO Arabians would naturally be an interesting problem. The following was written to Gordon McCreagh with permission to pass it on to Camp-Fire. There was more in the letter, but as it might make a certain Ghurka feel a bit uncomfortable, it's omitted.

Steubenville, Ohio.

Say, did you ever hear of an Arabian named Mohammed Ali (a very common name I'm sure, but wait), who claimed to have been brought to this country by Grover Cleveland as his valet, spent two years in Harvard University, head effendi on Roosevelt's expedition to Africa (I saw Roosevelt's letter of recommendation)? Head man on Buffalo Jones' African expedition who went there to lasso wild animals and the man who was the recognized leader of the Arabian laborers around Buffalo, N. Y., and Youngstown, Ohio.

I MET him when I was working in the employment office of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. He stands about six feet, weight about one hundred and sixty-five pounds, very dark brown complexion with typical Arab features, *viz.*, thin, high arched nose, clear eyes, thin lips, etc. He was a fine dresser and looked like a million dollars when he was dressed up. Nothing showy, but more like a well to do white man. I gave him a job as head fireman on the boilers in the middle of July and he liked it so well that he went back to Buffalo, N. Y. and brought back with him over three hundred Arabs.

Of course they all wanted work as fireman. They didn't mind the heat and as we had a hard time getting men for that job in Summer time we were glad to get them. I had always liked them and was a particular friend of Mohammed Ali's, so they always brought their troubles to me. And if I didn't have my hands full!

We had a labor camp for white laborers and also a camp for the negroes we imported from the South. I was not at the office the day the men were assigned to their quarters, but one of the fellows assigned them to the camp where the negroes lived. Well, the next day we had ——. The entire three hundred refused to live with the negroes and wanted to live with the white men. "We are white, Tjack," Mohammed said to me and bared his chest and he *was* white there. So I, in my youthfulness told them I would fix them up and assigned the entire bunch to the white laborers camp. Then I got ——. The whites were Slovaks, Bulgarians, Greeks and Finns and they chased the Arabians out of the camp after a pitched battle.

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WELL, there I was, with my Arabians on hand. All I could hear in the office that day was, "Preble's Arabians!" "What are we going to do with them." "King (the camp boss) says they won't eat their bacon in the morning." "Sure, they're niggers, look at their black hides." "No, they ain't, look at their faces." I sure did have a pleasant time with the waiting-room in the office crowded with three hundred wild Arabs all clicking and gurgling Arabic at once.

It was simple the way I settled it. We had almost completed a new labor camp and I promised them if they would stay with the negroes another day or two or find rooms for themselves for a short time that they could have the new camp. In addition I promised them I would have a little mosque built for them to pray in. That last part was a masterpiece, as I knew that, no matter how wild and bloodthirsty they seemed, they were always outwardly deeply religious. Well, after they had moved in their new quarters and had been fixed up all right I could have been king among them. They were eternally buying me cigars, cigarets and bringing me presents such as scarabs, and once a small nargileh or water-pipe. I asked one of their priests one day for a copy of the Koran in the original Arabic and after promising him I would take a bath, clean all up and put on my best clothes before I even touched it he promised to get me one. That was the only time any of them ever broke their promise to me, for I never got it. I hardly expected to get the Koran from them, but asked to see if I could.

THEY even got to eating bacon. Can you beat it? I knew the Koran taught them they could eat it when they were starving, so I told one of their priests, Moussa Sulayman, they sure would starve if they didn't eat it, so eat it they did. I was always welcome in the morning or any time they held services in their mosque, and I was the only man that was welcome. All I had to do was take off my shoes and kneel down with the rest of them and face the east. I got so I could say, "Allah il aha illa Allah., Mahmud rasul Allah" with the best of them.

I got Mohammed Ali a job in the English Army as interpreter for their Holy Land campaign, and I later enlisted and have never seen him since.—J. W. PREBLE, JR.

WHAT I once told Camp-Fire about calling frogs to the surface by a crude imitation of their croaking was told in entire good faith, but it was only one instance and, like Mr. Schaefer, I'm ready to believe it may have been coincidence. It certainly surprized me at the time, though I recovered in time to collect the frogs for bait. (Never got a strike on one of them!) I'm writing this in June and maybe soon I can get another chance to experiment at the same place, though not with the same frogs. If I do and get any results worth reporting I'll certainly do so. Also I'll be glad to hear from Mr. Schaefer as to his experiences this Summer.

How many of you are good enough naturalists to compute correctly the length of this boa from the size of the piece of skin?

Cranford, New Jersey.

Do you honestly think you can call frogs from the bottom of a brook to come up for bait or was it just coincidence? I am asking this as an honest question and not in a derisive sense, for the first thing that comes to mind is how far through water can sounds, made above it, travel. I can not recall ever having heard any made above when swimming completely submerged.

I BELIEVE frogs, like all animals with vocal chords, have distinct calls, but they must be out in the air to hear them from other species. I also know, as a boy, I could go to a frog-pond and by walking softly and making, what I believed, a sound that imitated a frog, I could get a mess to eat. I have tried to teach the trick to my own boy, but either my step is heavy or the call is off key or else I give the danger signal (unknowingly) or else I just plumb don't know how, but I do know that all the frogs within a mile jump into the water and stay there. Then by keeping very quiet for quite a while they again poke their heads out and I can get a couple, if I am quick enough. Anyhow your correspondent, ably assisted by yourself, brings up a question that is worth trying out. If I get results will be pleased to let you know, but we will both have to wait until the good old summertime rolls around once more.

To go back a few numbers *in re* the length of snakes. A friend of mine has a piece of a Boa-imperator's skin that is eight feet five inches long at present. At two feet from the head end it is ten inches wide of which 7½ inches are colored. The "spot" at this distance being broken, I can not give dimensions. At forty inches from the head the skin is also ten inches wide of which seven and one-half inches are also colored. The "spot" here being six and one-half inches long by one and one-half inches wide. There is a spot twenty-six inches from head end which is five inches by one and one-half inches. The length of the tail is twelve inches and the body at the base four inches wide. At three feet from the head, or rather, beginning at that point, the fourth and fifth spots both measure five and one-half by one and one-half inches. I know this is very incomplete, but thought the size might be computed from it.—L. J. SCHAEFER.

ABOUT the Custer massacre. And a bit of comfort for any comrades who are bald-headed:

Birmingham, Alabama.

I have read with much interest the many articles and letters in Camp-Fire, and noting our friend Huston's letter referring to Gen. Custer and Maj. Reno wish to add my contribution.

I was employed for about two years by A. I. Colton, who was a courier under Custer, and his story of the battle of the Little Big Horn and causes leading thereto follows:

NOT long before the battle, a man whose name had been forgotten, deserted from Custer's command, but afterward, being chased by hostile Indians, fled to the traveling column for protection. As he rode up, General Custer and his brother Tom pulled their pistols and shot the deserter.

This news reached the War Department, and Custer learned that a court martial was imminent,

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so he conceived the plan of breaking the Sioux in order that the offense might be condoned.

His plan, as has so often been stated, was to make an attack and Major Reno was to make a flank attack after the battle was under way. Had this attack been delivered, there is little doubt in the minds of those familiar with the Indian methods of fighting that the plan would have been successful, in spite of the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Indians, as even the Sioux, who were acknowledged to be the best of the plains Indians, were averse to a hand-to-hand battle in mass.

IF ANY other Camp-Fire readers have heard this version, I would be glad to know it, for, though I have heard it from several sources in my life among the Indians and old-timers, it has never appeared in print, so far as I know.

So far as Major Reno's defection is concerned, I have been told various stories—that he was lost in the hills and arrived too late, that he simply quit and deliberately failed to follow orders, etc., but evidence was as corroborative of one story as the other.

I ALSO wish to add a humorous touch to the story of the Canby Massacre as told me by Jake Riddle himself, while I was living among the Modocs in 1896.

Meacham was entirely bald, and when the Indian who had knocked him down with a club attempted to scalp him, he found an unexpected obstacle, as there was absolutely no way to get the scalp loose. After exhausting all means at his disposal, he finally attempted to pull it off with his teeth, but was interrupted by Jake's shout that the soldiers were coming. As a matter of fact, they were not coming, this being only a ruse on his part.—O. D. WILSON.

HERE is some interesting dope from one of our old-timers, about Sam Bass and Wild Bill. And an inquiry about Luke Short.

Arlington, Texas.

I'm stepping up to the blaze once more to ask a few questions and let a little light on the "Wild Bill" discussion.

FIRST: Do any of the herd know of Luke Short? I knew one Luke Short well here in Ft. Worth, years ago while at the White Elephant saloon and would like to know if the stories about a Luke Short and two other men that hit the trail to Dodge City, Kansas, while the rule of the lawless elements had the best of the decent and put the crime wave down in one night, are true and if by chance this Luke Short came from Texas way, so I can learn if it was my friend.

IN RE "Wild Bill" Hickok. Wild Bill was a white man and acted like one. He was the upholder of the law every time.

One day Bill was lured to a cabin out of town and was attacked by six greasers. Bill used a knife in the fight and next morning there were six newly dug graves occupied by six sons of Mexico.

In re to the fellow Bill shot and killed on the Square, I would like to say Bill gave the man as fair a chance as I would ask a man for and did not shoot him down without a chance as some one stated at Camp-Fire. Bill and this man, who seemed inclined to be boastful, engaged in a game of stud poker. The man won every hand. Bill kept still and said nothing until he detected the fellow's trick then said: "You're cheating."

The fellow blew up, cursed Bill and dared him to fight. Bill told him that he didn't want to kill him but if he would give his (Bill's) watch (which had been last stake) back to him he would not harm him.

The fellow refused, boasting that on the next day, at twelve o'clock, he would be on the Square and to show them he was not afraid of Wild Bill, he would proclaim the hour when it rolled around.

The next day he fulfilled his boast. Bill killed him, then, turning to the crowd, asked: "Any of you gentlemen object?"

No one did.

ONE night I met Sam Bass while camping in Trinity River bottoms about ten miles below Dallas, Texas, when he walked into camp. I was just fifteen years of age and was hauling lumber from Dallas to Rockwall which town my father was late mayor of. Sam stayed all night with me and I did not know who he was until he was about to depart the next morning, when he said: "Son, if any one asks if you have seen Sam Bass, you haven't. Understand?"

I almost fell off the wagon.

About nine o'clock I met a posse. The sheriff stopped me and asked: "Sonny, have you seen a young fellow with long black hair, riding a white stallion, around here?"

Somehow I just couldn't set the law-hounds on the kid's trail and I pointed in the opposite direction he had taken. "Yes, sir," I said "he went that way." Turning about, they rode away in the direction I had indicated.

A few months later Sam and four other men, whom I took to be Joe Collins, Rickinson, Jackson and "Old Dad," rode up to the fence that circled the field wherein I was ploughing. They asked a few questions, then Sam offered me a drink of whisky. I refused it saying, "No, thanks. Mother doesn't allow me to drink."

Sam looked at me and said: "That's right, son, mind your Ma," then added, "I wouldn't be where I am to-day, if I had minded mine."

One of the fellows, the oldest one, coughed and changed the subject.

I've often wondered how many other young fellows that, like Sam, have "gone wrong in the making" and been pursued and dogged and hounded by the grim hand of the law, have voiced these same words: "If I had only minded mother."

SAM was hanged, shot, snake-bit and drowned all at one time and then the young rascal popped up again. A mob got him once and hanged him. In a blood-thirsty frenzy some of them began shooting at his suspended body. A shot broke the rope and his body fell and rolled off into the river. From the place his body had struck a large rattlesnake was seen to wiggle away. They dragged the river but couldn't find his body.

A farmer asked one of the returning mob if Sam was really dead.

"If he ain't, he ought to be," he replied. "He was shot, hanged, snake-bit and drowned."

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Sam later said his falling body must have stunned the snake, and that when he struck the water it revived him. Coming to the surface, he found himself under a pile of driftwood where he remained until night-fall, then escaped.

Sam is buried at Round Rock, near Austin, Texas.—CHAS. B. MCCAFFERTY.

MAYBE this will make a certain low-voiced Westerner blush and cuss, but, after all, you can't really shoot people for saying complimentary things and I don't believe he'll go gunning after E. E. Harriman for writing the following, or me for printing it. In it, Mr. Harriman has unblushingly advertised a particular motion-picture show, but the idea back of that show deserves any free advertising it gets.

Los Angeles.

I have just returned from calling on Bill Tilghman, scout, plainsman, United States marshal, State senator, sheriff, peace officer, police chief of Oklahoma City, Indian fighter, buffalo hunter and gunman for the law.

BILL is well set up, solid, a good height, square shouldered, mild and low voiced. He believes that the young men and boys need to see wild Western shows that do not idealize the ruffian and outlaw. So he has written and filmed a story—"The Passing of the Oklahoma Outlaws."

Bill has made some history in Oklahoma and he is fully able to do more along that line. Take one look into his quiet face and you know that he is a safe one to tie to, if you are straight, but a bad one to buck if you are crooked.

BILL lifted the lid of a low, flat-topped trunk and waved a hand for me to look within. There lay fifteen revolvers, with barrels all the way from five inches to nine inches in length. He has had them polished and heavily plated with gold and silver. Some were gold throughout. Some had gold barrels and silver ornaments. Some had gold cylinders and silver barrels. There were pearl handles and ivory handles, wood handles in light color and wood handles in dark color.

"This gun shot my hat off," remarked Bill, handing me a short, thick Colt. "This one is the gun Bill Doolin, king of the Oklahoma outlaws, packed when I took him in. This is the one Henry Starr used. Here is one that was carried for a long time by Frank James."

So he went through the list till he came to a long, slim, old style Colts that had been built for powder and ball.

"My old partner packed that in the early days," he said, with much gentle feeling in his tone. Then paused and his eyes looked as though he were remembering days of long ago.

BILL looks like a man whom you would just naturally tell your real troubles to, but to whom you would never spill the little fool things. He gives the impression that he would hand out "chuck" to a hungry chap as naturally as he would clamp the spurs into a bad bronc. He is just the epitome of the Far West at its very best, generous, kindly, firm, cool, daring, loyal and strong. I saw Bill Tilghman but this one time, but I am ready to put my money on him. Furthermore—if I were in a scrap, with right on my side, and Bill Tilghman were within reach—I would never worry about my back being kept clear.

AWAY back in 1884, in southern Kansas, it was my fortune to have a quiet, low voiced man with eyes that resembled Bill's, come up to me, put his hand on my arm and say "You're all right. I'm with you."

I noticed indications of marked respect on the part of bystanders and after the quiet man had passed on one of them informed me as to his past history. I did not get the name and have wondered many times since that date who the quiet man was. Bill told me today. "Why, that was McCluskey! Sure! He was down there then and you have described him to a hair. Mighty quiet, but mighty deadly at times. Killed a-many."

They told me in Kansas that the quiet man had fourteen notches on his gun, or the right to that many. I wonder how many times we pass by mild looking, quiet men who are really the ballast that keeps the ship on an even keel, never suspecting that they are anybody worth a look.

"I want the young folks to understand just how low and ornery and mean the life of an outlaw is," says Bill. "My play is written with a purpose—an idea back of it—and that is just it, to show the real thing in a way to take the shine off outlawry. Discourage the fools that get a notion it is smart and desirable."—E. E. HARRIMAN.

THIS comrade was one of those who called our attention to a slip we'd let one of our writers' brigade make as to the habits of high explosive. And he added the following about rattlers:

Durango, Colorado

I want to buy into the rattlesnake game with this: Southwest of Cripple Creek is Rattlesnake Gulch. Rock rattlers—short and thick. They never rattle until they strike or are struck. Have been in there off and on for twenty years and this statement is the result of personal experience and inquiry. Would be glad to hear whether such rattlers are know elsewhere. Last man who doubted my word broke record for backward standing jump when he straightened up from cutting a small quakie for a snake club and exchanged coy glances with a nine-rattle snake not three feet away—less then length of snake. That snake did not rattle even when shot at and closely missed twice by a .22. Blind? No. Any time during snake season they fail to "ring da bell." Somebody explain it.—FRED B. MORRIS.

HERE'S a "my first *Adventure*" story from a comrade who is now settled down in army life:

Fort Bliss, Texas.

I'd like to tell you that in my hoboing days 1912-1914, I traveled over Ill., Wis., Minn., No. Dak., Mont., W. V., Mo., and saw some awful things. One day in 1913 I wanted to go from Harve, Mont., to Seattle, but took the wrong train to Great Falls, Mont. About sixteen miles from old Fort Benton the train which I was riding on ran into a local freight, killing one fireman and piling about seven

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cars one on top of the other. Later a passenger train came along, two swell dudes got off the train and, as I was the only one not doing anything, they started to ask questions. I gave them some awful hard-luck stories, which ended in them buying me a swell feed and giving me one of your magazines. That was the first *Adventure* I read.—ALBERT TRAXLER, Cook Wagon Co., No. 14.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

HOW are you going to vote at this coming presidential election?

It is not the province of this department to attempt to tell Americans how to vote. If you are the right kind of American you won't let anybody tell you how to vote anyway. And unless the principles that have been advocated in this department should some day become issues at an election, I shall not even urge any of you to vote for any particular person or thing. But the principles that have been advocated here are not party principles and party is the chief thing to be voted for at this election.

There is another reason for my not advising any one how to vote. I don't know how to vote myself. I can see no choice whatever between the Republican and Democratic tickets. It's just a question of which gang you want to have get the spoils and run the country for the next four years. A difference in platforms? Yes, but why even read the platforms? Neither party abides by its platforms except as it happens to suit party convenience; they merely draft an imposing lot of words, promising the people lots of nice things, and then break their promises and do as they please.

And we call it democracy and still nurse the delusion that this is a government of, by and for the people. It is a government of, by and for political parties.

Both parties have chosen candidates who are nice, tame, well-broken party horses. Otherwise they wouldn't have been chosen. Neither has shown himself big enough to be of special importance in his own right. Neither was chosen by any popular demand, neither was even of national prominence. The two men nominated for Vice-President would have been just as good as Cox and Harding for President, or better. So would thousands of others. Cox and Harding were merely yanked out of comparative obscurity because they were the most satisfactory party hacks their respective parties could agree upon. Comparatively speaking, they are nothing, stand for nothing, will do nothing. And the parties are deluging us with hundreds of thousands of newspaper columns about Harding and Cox from infancy to date, about what they did when they were six and sixteen and twenty-six, about all their relations and friends, about all the silly details that have nothing to do with their real qualifications for President. That's just to make us think Cox and Harding are important.

Same old bunk. And we are the same old goats.

Of course it's largely our own fault. Less than thirty per cent. of us American voters voted at the primaries. The other seventy-odd per cent. of us betrayed our country. We could at least have chosen the men most of us wanted. But we'd rather stay home and then say wisely that the primary system is a failure. It is we who are the failures. Even our present system of nomination and election would be fairly democratic in practise if we citizens did our duty as citizens.

But wouldn't it be better if we the people could vote direct for President and vote direct on each of the important questions the country faces?

What other parties are there? None that are any better. The Democratic and Republican parties are capitalistic parties, but first and foremost they are parties run for the profit and "glory" of the politicians who control them. The other, newer and smaller parties are just as bad. They, too, are class parties. The only difference is that some of them, being younger, are perhaps at present run more for a class than for the politicians who control them. That will change as soon as the "pickings" become bigger and the party machinery more developed.

The Republican and Democratic parties are reactionary, with not much to choose between them. Not being a reactionary, I'd vote against both of them if it were not for the belief that four years more of reactionary rule would probably do more than anything else to bring about reforms. Even

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sheep like us reach a limit of endurance. On the other hand, the thought of voting either the Democratic or the Republican ticket this fall makes me sick at the stomach.

Why isn't there a party that stands, not for a class, but for the interests of the people as a whole? A party that isn't run for itself but for the country? The Committee of Forty-Eight aimed in this direction and tried to unite various progressive factions, but each faction was too intent upon its own interests to make the whole people's interests its business. The Committee of Forty-Eight were swallowed up in a political convention by the Farmer-Labor party, the remnants still standing for the broader progressive aim but powerless. At this writing in August some of the Farmer-Labor leaders are reported to have resigned because that party is too much under I. W. W. control. Certainly it seems to be only slightly representative of farmers in general, except in its name, and to be at least as class-controlled at one extreme as the Republican and Democratic parties are at the other. The Non-Partisan League, with many excellent points as well as some bad ones, may be non-partisan but it is primarily for a class, not the whole people. The Socialist party is as feudal as the Democratic and Republican; a greater proportion of its membership is represented in its machine, but it demands a closer and more direct allegiance to party in distinction from the people as a whole.

A sad mess and a ridiculous one for those of us who are trying to be Americans first and farmers, laborers or capitalists second. Why isn't there a party you can join without espousing one class against another? More important, why isn't there some way by which the mass of the people can express their will direct on separate measures and in the choice of candidates, instead of having a few bunches of politicians, capitalists, revolutionaries and workmen select a few platforms, leaving us no chance to do anything but vote on one platform entire without being able to discriminate among its separate planks? We are supposed to be a democracy, a government of, by and for the people. Sit down and figure steadily for a week how far we are from really being that. It will take you all that time to compute the distance.

Yet we could have that kind of real democracy, without revolution and without changing our general form of government. All that is necessary is for the people themselves to organize merely as citizens and voters without regard to party or class. Organize into units of any convenient size; organize these units into groups, those groups into still larger groups, and so on, as has already been given in detail in this department. Voting on any man or measure at any time then becomes a simple matter and every voter can register his exact wishes on every issue. Some shallow-pate at once cries "Ah, the soviet system!" Aside from the fact that there is much good in the soviet system despite its defects, it would be equally to the point to cry "Ah, New England town meeting!" It is far less the former than the latter, and the old New England town meeting is scarcely to be labeled radical. But the truthful thing to cry is "Ah, real, practical democracy!"

Personally I believe firmly that, unless we Americans take some such step as this, creating new machinery for expressing and enforcing the people's will under our present form of government, we shall have to face a revolution, perhaps not a bloodless one, and within a very few years.

Bolshevism is only one phase of the unrest that is sweeping the world in rebellion against the selfish injustices done by capital. It is a swing of the pendulum in the other direction, a violent swing accompanied by all the destruction, injustices and mistakes usual to violent swings. It is only the more powerful and dangerous because it is trying to right a wrong in a wrong way. Think of it what you please, but note that it is spreading over the world like a prairie fire. The unrest against the rule of capital is everywhere; if you don't want it to take the violent path of Bolshevism and revolution, then you must clear the lawful path to real democracy. There is no way to clear that path except to give the people real control of their own public affairs.

And yet you do nothing. You have watched Bolshevism spread over all of Russia, spread thousands of miles to the east, spread to the south, batter and worm its way to the west. Yet you do not wake up. When *will* you wake up?

I am only an alarmist? The wiseacres explained that Bolshevism would soon collapse and have kept on explaining for three and a half years during which Bolshevism has grown stronger instead of weaker. But, you say, western Europe and this country have something better than had these other countries before Bolshevism. Yes, but how much better? Not *enough* better, and the proof of this is the surging unrest in this country and western Europe. That unrest demands something better than it has now. If no other path is opened it will take the Bolshevist path.

And we Americans doze on, feeling as remote from Bolshevism as we did from the world war. But the world war suddenly ceased to be remote.

Probably we could crush it, but crushing a revolution, engaging in civil war, is not a pleasant or a profitable experience. It would be more intelligent to kill Bolshevism in advance by providing a better substitute as a remedy against present unjust conditions. But you can't do that by doing nothing.—A. S. H.

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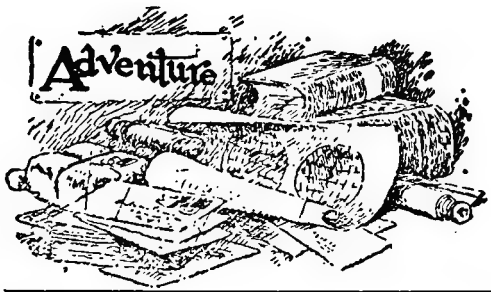

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"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: Jan., 1915 to Mid-June, 1920 for $10.00 — Address O. W. REISNER, 628 New York Ave., Sheboygan, Wis.

WILL SELL: Feb., 1915; Nov., 1915. First and Mid-Nov., 1917; First and Mid-Jan., 1918; First March, 1918; First June, 1918; First and Mid-Oct., 1918; First and Mid-Dec., 1918. Mid-July, 1919 to Mid-July, 1920. 20 cents each or lot postpaid $6.50.—Address WALTER M. EVANS, 69 Gilmour St., Ottawa, Canada.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 519 Citizens Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Hamilton, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, canoeing.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel, *Especially* early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 1101 Kimball Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 20 Ashland Blvd., Chicago, Ill. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border States of old Mexico; Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure* magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*
[*Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S.; its possessions, or Canada.*

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13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering southeastern Ontario and the Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Tweed, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, traping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure* magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure* magazine, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, the Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports, manufacturing.

26. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan; commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A.; Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing, explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Care Society of Authors and Composers, Central Building, Tothill St., Westminster, London, England. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

32. ★ New Zealand and the South Sea Islands
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

33. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history. (*Postage 5 cents.*)

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg, Chicago., Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

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Britain's Oldest Colony

NEWFOUNDLAND is indeed the sportsman's paradise, but the island also holds a bread-and-butter interest for us fellows here in the office, for it is a big factor in magazine making in these days of paper shortage:

Question:—"Will you kindly favor me with a brief description of Newfoundland, its industries, and any information regarding mining stocks, its mineral resources and government?"—FRED. H. PHILLIPS, Cobourg, Ont.

Answer, by Mr. Belford:—It is a pleasure to hear from Cobourg. I went to school there more years ago than I like to think of, and I know the old Arlington very well. A crowd of us used to shoot pool there, and dodge the marker when possible.

Newfoundland does not belong to the Dominion of Canada. It is a British Crown colony and prides itself on being the oldest of that far-flung line. Its history goes back to the days of Cabot, is associated with the famous Sir Walter Raleigh and the ill-fated Sir Humphrey Gilbert. For one reason and another it has not shared fully in the advance of other Western countries, but has now taken on new life, and is bound to become a big factor in the life of the American continent.

For centuries it has been the center of the deep-sea fishing industries, and today that is still the principal source of wealth. But the paper and pulp industry is developing, there is a tremendous forest growth, coal and other minerals are being mined, agriculture is increasing, and the whole island is on the verge of big things.

The government is an elective one presided over by a governor appointed from England, the administration of justice is well carried out, education is receiving much attention, and the churches are well established.

The chief cities and towns are St. Johns, the capital; Harbor Grace, Placentia, Bonavista, Bonadventure, Grand Falls—paper town. The Reid railway system runs from the southwest corner of the island, near Cape Ray, north to Grand Lake, east to Benton, and south to St. Johns, with a branch to the Bay of Exploits.

Newfoundland is one of the great game countries of the world; moose, caribou; in fact almost every sort of game found in temperate climates; wonderful fishing; good guides; in fact a sportsman's paradise.

The Newfoundland government will send you publications along any desired line if you write them at St. Johns.

Texas Oil-Fields

SAME story here apparently as in any other pioneer country—big wages and high prices; women, children and cripples back of the ropes:

Question:—"Have been reading about the oil strikes and the big pay they are paying.

Where or what part of Texas would be the best place to go? What would the climate be? Would one need arms of any kind for protection? Are they really paying such big wages?

Have had experience at rigging and pumping and understand motors."—R. H. ALLEN, So. Medford, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—There have been in the past year many wells found in Texas; some have been paying and some have not. There have been very few wells of the gushing type found lately and work around oil-fields has become very scarce although there is plenty of work for those that will work.

The pay has been very good; ordinary workman's wages have been from $5 to $6.50 per day. Experienced oil men, such as rig-builders, mechanics, pipe-fitters, and work of this character, have been paid from $12.50 to $15.00 per day. The expenses are very great, so a person is not able to save much more there than he would out of the oil-fields under ordinary conditions.

The best fields have been in Wichita County, Eastland County, and the counties in that vicinity which are in the northern portion of the State. The average climate of this section of Texas is never severe, either Summer or Winter.

It is against the law to carry concealed weapons in this State, but every man is entitled to a firearm in his home for protection.

Your experience at rigging and pumping and your knowledge of motors will be a big asset in applying for a mechanic's job around the oil-fields. They are always on the lookout for men that have some knowledge of this kind of work and if they will stick and not become a "floater" as so many often become, a few months in the oil-fields will net you a nice tidy sum.

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to Ask Adventure editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

U. S. Arms Are the Best

IT IS an unequivocal statement that Mr. Wiggins makes regarding the relative merits of American and foreign firearms. Incidentally it may be pertinent to point out once more that this department is conducted for the sole purpose of giving information, and is not at all an advertising medium:

Question:—"I want to buy an automatic ejector Purdy shotgun, twenty, sixteen or twelve gage. Have you anything in this line on hand? The same specifications apply to a Parker.

Send me a catalog, if you have one.

This inquiry is the result of your advertisement in the June issue of *Adventure*, page 187."—A. P. PUJO, Lake Charles, La.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—In response to your letter I must inform you that I do not sell firearms, merely reply to questions in regard to them.

You will be able to secure anything in the Parker line from the following firm:

Messrs. Kirtland Brothers, 96 Chambers St., New York. While they do not list any Purdys,

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I know they will be able to import one for you.

But why an English weapon, when our American arms, dollar to dollar, are so far superior to the overseas gun? I have made the comparison many times, and even my natural inclination to the American gun doesn't influence me in the least in this decision. Parker, Fox, Smith, Ithaca, or Lefever—all truly wonderfully well-made guns.

(Hist, tell it not in Gath, whisper it not in the streets of Ashkelon; ye scribe shooteth a "pump-stick," and a twenty at that.)

Trust this will set you on the right road to the best gun ever.

Maoris

BEST of all aborigines on earth—that's Tom L. Mills's verdict on the Maoris:

Question:—"Write and tell me something about the Maoris of New Zealand, as I am travel-crazy about now."—EILEEN KEATY, Baton Rouge, La.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—You would not like the look of some of our natives (Maoris) if you saw them in their native habitat, on the mat, in their *pa* villages, away in the back country. But the Maoris we see every day in the cities and towns are handsome, well-dressed, well-educated (many of them have been to college).

When the first missionaries came, not one hundred years ago, the New Zealand natives were cannibals. Today there are Maoris in our Parliament (even representing European constituencies), Maori orators (the very best), poets and musicians. Maoris fought alongside my son in Gallipoli. A splendid race—best of all aborigines on earth.

Up till quite recently the Maoris had a cannibalistic religion, called Hauhauism, which also encouraged rebellion against the European settlers in the back country. But that has all died a natural death as the result of the growth of settlement and civilization.

Away back in the fastnesses of what is practically Unknown Maoriland there is a so-called Maori Prophet, Rua, who has a fairly large following. He caused trouble for some years. But some two years ago a posse of police was sent in after Rua. They brought him into Auckland, put him on trial for sedition, sent him to jail for a short spell, and then sent him back home again. He has been a good boy ever since. His religion contains a strong mixture of Mormonism, and he has a fairly large harem of dusky maids. The Maoris were always polygamous. Perhaps this explains why Mormon elders have been so successful in proselytizing the natives over here these twenty-five years.

The ancient Maori customs are fast dying out, and the native of today has nothing like the memory for the past history of his own family or his tribe that his father and granddad had. That the ancient glories of ceremonial Maoridom have departed was clearly demonstrated at Rotorua a few weeks ago when the full strength of the most notable Maoris was gathered in that wonderland to give a typical Maori welcome to the Prince of Wales, heir to the British throne. Much of the ceremonial was tawdry, unreal, and faked, because the modern Maori has forgotten how to do the Haka, the Poi, the Canoe, and other ancient dances to the manner born.

The get-up of the natives was grotesque, proving that the Maori has lost his most precious inheritance—dignity, and respect for his ancient customs. Even within the nineteen years that the same ceremonies were gone through in Rotorua before King George (then Duke of Cornwall) there was a vast difference. Trusting this brevity will satisfy you, *Kia Ora!* (which is good Maori for Good Luck!)

Put at least five cents postage on all letters addressed to Ask Adventure editors who live outside the U. S. Always enclose at least five cents in International Reply Coupons for answer.

Snow-Shoe Webbing

BY WAY of encouraging home industry, why not make your own snow-shoes? The matter of webbing probably offers the greatest difficulty to most amateur artizans:

Question:—"Your name is given as authority on snow-shoes, so I am appealing to you, for have made myself and daughter two pairs of shoes out of white ash, but am unable to find anything in this city to fill them. Will you kindly tell me what kind of hide they should have, and where I can buy the same? Have been told moose-hide is the only thing, as that doesn't stretch. It might just as well be elephant hide so far as I am concerned, as neither moose nor elephant go chasing up the streets in this town."—FRANK W. WILDER, Worcester, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Snow-shoes are strung with rawhide, as the skin of a horse, cow, moose, caribou, etc. The skin, taken from the animal, is soaked in lukewarm water till the hair can be scraped off. Then the rawhide is dried, cut into long strips ¼ to ½ inch wide, depending on thickness, and soaked, hung with 10 or 15 pound weights till dry, soaked and stretched again till stretch is out of them. Then the webbing is woven through the snow-shoe bow.

We use cowhide and horsehide in the Adirondacks. You could get enough horsehide from any boneyard or the like that may be in your region. A good way to stretch the string is to hang it in loops from a pole, put another pole through and hang weights on the pole that hangs down, to get about 12 pounds on each string, average.

"Sparks" and the Times He Has

IF YOUR feet are loose as ashes and you want to get around the world in comfort, this looks to be as good a way as any:

Question:—"I am eighteen years old and graduate of high school; I am fond of adventure and I always had a desire to travel and see the world. On several occasions, during several vacations, I did a man's work on the railroad, and I am not afraid of work.

I should like an answer to the following questions pertaining to the sea:

What is the pay, rating, and opportunity for travel as a radio operator on our merchant vessels,

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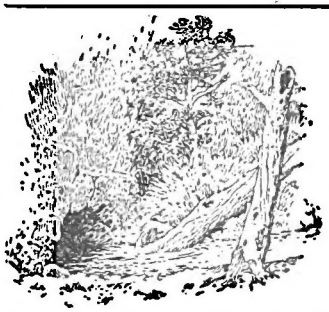
and is employment easily obtained if one is proficient in this work?

Is it possible for one to become a marine engineer without going to college? How? What is the pay of a ship's engineer?"—BEN F. WHITE.

Answer, by Mr. Brown:—Radio operators on merchant ships on this coast receive on an average $100 a month. A good operator has little difficulty in getting a berth. Indeed, he can select his ship as a rule and go anywhere in the world that he feels inclined to, by shipping on vessels bound for the particular port he has in mind.

Marine engineers as a rule are not technical graduates, but men who have mastered their trade by service at sea and often by shop-work ashore to supplement their sea training.

The U. S. Shipping Board maintains free schools for the purpose of training young men who have had sea experience in the engine-room for licenses as engineers. For example, any boy over nineteen who has had two years' experience as oiler or watertender on a sea-going vessel or three years' service as a fireman is entitled to enter these schools and get his final intensive training which will qualify him for engineer's papers. Chief engineers get up to $300 a month at the present time, although the average pay runs lower.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

BARRON, J. E. Civil Engineer. Last heard of in Manzanillo, Mexico, about June 15, 1916. His old friend would like to hear from him.—Address KENNETH SCOTT, 135 E. Troy St., Ferndale Branch, Detroit, Mich.

PARKER, DONALD W. H. C. U. S. N. Enlisted in the Hospital Corps, U. S. Navy, May 6, 1917. Last heard of aboard the U. S. S. *Baltimore* in August, 1918. Any information as to his present address would be greatly appreciated by his old pal.—Address R. W. ROBINSON, 2825 Washington Bl., Chicago, Ill.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SOONTUPE, SAM (EDDIE HAINES). Left Philadelphia twelve or thirteen years ago. May have made connections with some theatrical troupe or moving-picture enterprise. Last heard from 1144 Broadway, New York City. Any information will be appreciated.—Address MAX FRUCHTER, 242 New Jersey Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

McDONOUGH, RODERICK. Smith, Boob, Blyth, Kenneth, Cooper, Harold (Lizzie) or any of the boys from V. I. S. Mimico, Ont., Canada, who were there in the years 1911-1914 please write to ERNEST R. WHATELY, 810 E. Anahiem, Wilmington, Cal.

VAN SAVE, MAMIE. Mother. Last heard from in Washington about 1912 or 1913. She remarried in 1907 or 1908. Please write to me if you have any love for me or care to hear from me.—Address MISS HAZEL ELDRIDGE, Box 475, Oxford, Mich.

LAW, MERTON EDWARD. Born at Meaford, Ont. At one time lived in Washington, D. C. All is well and we would be happy if we could hear from you. Address your brother ALFRED, 1519 E St. S. E., Washington, D. C.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the First February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

ANNA, M. W. Do come home at once to your dear heart-broken husband and brother. We have tried every way to locate you, as Ray is failing fast and is despondent from grief. Please come at once, as we need you very much. We are anxiously waiting and watching for you to return.—BROTHER JOHN.

MURPHY, JESSE T. Son. Light brown hair, large gray eyes, about six feet tall, weighs 170 pounds and is seventeen years of age. Wore blue coat and trousers, tan army shoes, green hat. Was in Kansas City June 2nd. Never failed to write home often. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JULIA A. MURPHY, Farmington, Ark.

I WOULD like to hear from any member of the two I. O. G. T. Lodges that met at the Soldiers' Home in 1914 at Tien Tsin, N. China.—Address HARVEY MORRIS, R. 1160129, Y. 3, Q. M. C., Camp Meade, Md.

D'ERRICO, LOUIS. Fifteen years of age, five feet two inches tall, dark brown hair, has scar above left eye. Left home at 881 Kent Ave., and has only been heard from twice. Once from Christfield, Md., and once from Pittsburgh, Pa. His mother is heart-broken. Any information will be appreciated.—Address JOSEPH D'ERRICO, 881 Kent Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

SCHULTZ, WILLIAM. "Gus." Thirty-five years old, five feet eight inches tall, weighs 170 pounds, dark brown hair mixed with gray, hazel eyes; occupation, plumber and steam-fitter. Left wife and children in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Any one having information regarding this man please communicate with WILLIAM E. BURTON, Washington & Madison Aves., Bridgeport, Conn.

CALAMIA, JAMES A. I last heard from him in Brooklyn, N. Y. Write to your old pal Billy.—Address WM. H. POFFENBERGER, Parsons, W. Va.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WESNER, CHARLES, alias Charles Brown. Lived in or near Vincennes, Indiana. Last heard of in Arkansas swamps in 1901 or 1902. Has two daughters and three sons. Have important news. Write your son. Any information will be appreciated.—HARRY WESNER, 2119 E. 107th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

STAEDTLER, EMIL. Formerly a soldier at Ft. Screven, Ga. After the war started was in the Remount Depot at Macon, Ga. About twenty-eight years old, and speaks German as well as English. Any information as to his address will be rewarded. Last seen in Savannah, Ga., in 1919. Have an important message for him.—Address J. L. CARTER, Millen, Ga.

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FIEDLER, JOE. Last heard of in Brooklyn, N. Y., in 1902. His son would like to learn his whereabouts.—Address ABRAHAM FIEDLER, 186 Orange St., Newark, N. J.

BROWN, CARL. Husband. Left home recently. Has a crippled boy, six years old, who needs his care. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—MRS. CARL BROWN, 903 Vine St., Hannibal, Mo.

VALLEN, ARTHUR. Last seen in Kansas City, Kansas, in February, 1919. Has black hair and brown eyes, five feet seven inches tall. His home is in Boston, Mass. His old pal Billy would like to hear from him.—Address WM. H. POFFENBERGER, Box 42, Parsons, W. Va.

FRIENDS of Broadway Whitey, write to *Adventure* for present address.

PHILPOTT, GEORGE VICTOR. Please come home. Write to your wife first.—Address Gen. Del., East Pittsburgh, Pa.

McWILLIAMS, WALTER. Last heard of in Dallas, Texas. Age about seventeen years. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—JAMES McWILLIAMS, 1022 Front St., Alliance, Ohio.

KENNEDY, BILL. Last heard of at Trinidad, Colo., Feb., 1920, en route to Mexico. Possibly interested in latest Mexican revolution Ex-member 115th Ammunition Train. Am just back from Russia. Failed to receive your mail. Wire me at once, in order that we may complete our plans for proposed expedition. Any news from others concerning his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address THOMAS P. RAGSDALE, Columbus, Mont.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Mid October or First November issues of Adventure. They can get the name of inquirer from this magazine:

ALLEN, JEROME; Bass, Edgar Lee; Bentley, Milton Reynolds; Callahan, Morris, alias Morris Kessler; Clegg, Arthur; Coutant, Fred I.; De Haven, Wm. Stringer; De Lisle, Frank A.; Eastman, Edward J.; Estvan, Joseph; Foley, C. W.; Forsyth, Thomas; Gibbs; Hall, Florence (maiden name Florence Nutbrown or Baxter); Hayes, Frank F.; Hill, Ernie C.; Howard, Charlie; Keney, George A., alias Ryviers; Kierstead, James Amos; Latimer, Rev.; Lilly, W. A.; Lyon, C. W. Jr., McCoy, George; McDermott, Mrs. Chrystal (maiden name Chrystal Darnell); Myers, James G.; Nelson, Olla; Prime, Mort; Raymond & Eddie; Robel, James F.; Schwartz, Barney; Sterling, William; Vincent, Donald; Volkman, Charles G.; Watkins, Morrill; Whittemore, Arthur R.; Young, Jack; Zavisink, Frank, alias Mandes A. Slovenian.

MISCELLANEOUS: Any one of the old 15th Sep. Batt. of the 5th Reg. U. S. Marines; members of Promethean Pub. Co.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Lieutenant Wm. S. Hilles; G. H. Bennett; Byron Chisholm: A. B. Paradis; E. E. S. Atkins; G. E. Hungerford; A. Gaylord: E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; E. Murphy; J. Higmon; J. E. Warner; L. E. Patten; L. T. Bennett; Sinn Cardie; James Mosse; C. E. Wilson; R. W. Kimsey; C. H. Huntington; D. Polowe.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

BEATON, SGT. MAJOR G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bertsch, Elizabeth; Bonner, Major J. S.; Mrs. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; "Chink"; Coles, Bobby; Cook, Elliot D.; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Crashley, Wm. T.; Eager, Paul Roman; Erwin, Phil; Fairfax, Boyd; Fisher, Edward E.; Fisher, Sgt. R.; Garson, Ed.; Gordon, W. A.; Green, Billy; Green, W.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Harwood, J.; Hoffman, J. M.; Hughes, Frank E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Jackson, Robert R.; Kohlhammer, Jack; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Sgt. Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lauder, Harry; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry, A. R. C.; Lee, Dr. William R.; Lewis, Warburton; "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Martel, Leon H.; Nelson, Frank Lovell; O'Hara, Jack; Parker, G. A; Parker, Dr. M.; Parrott, Pvt. D. C.; Phillips, Buffington; Phipps, Corbett C.; Pigeon, A. H.; Rich, Wagoner, Bob; Rinkenbach, Frank; Rundle, Merrill G.; Schmidt, G.; Scott, Pvt. James F.; Swan, George L.; Tripp, Edward N.; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Ward, Frank B.; Wheeler, S. H.; Williams, W. P.; J. C. H.; L. T. 348; S. 177284; 439; WS-XV.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you. Address L. B. BARRETTO, care of *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

FIRST DECEMBER ISSUE

In addition to the stories mentioned on the second contents page and the serial now running, the following stories come to you with the next issue:

NOT FOR A THOUSAND — ***By Chester L. Saxby***
Arnte yields again to the call of the sea.

THE TUCANDEIRA — ***By Arthur O. Friel***
The endurance test of the Amazon.

HEARTS THAT BEAT — ***By Thomas J. Malone***
A detective discovers a rare motive.

GRIM JOKES — ***By Barry Scobee***
Two men cross the Mexican desert.

THE WORM THAT TURNED — ***By A. W. Callisen***
The coolie and the white devils.

EMERGENCY CARDS — ***By Charles T. Davis***
Slim Hawkins is asked to join a poker game.

PLUM DUFF — ***By Kenneth Payson Kempton***
Mark Dobey ships under a new skipper.

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